NATIVE LITERACY RESEARCH REPORT

by
Carmen Rodriguez
and
Don Sawyer

NATIVE ADULT EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTRE
Okanagan College
Salmon Arm, B.C.

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For further information on literacy programs, contact:

Provincial Literacy Coordinator
Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia V8V 1X4

For further information contact:

Co-Ordinator, Native Education Programs
Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B. C. V8V 1X4

For further information regarding the Native Adult Education Resource Centre, contact:

Native Adult Education Resource Centre
Okanagan College
Box 610
Salmon Arm, B.C. V1E 4N7
Telephone: (604) 832-3221 or Fax: (604) 832-2771

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I. Introduction

This report grew out of a perception on the part of the Native Adult Education Resource Centre, reinforced by Native literacy educators from the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, the Native Education Centre in Vancouver, and other organizations, that the serious issue of Native illiteracy was either being ignored or approached through inappropriate and ineffective means. This concern was heightened by the implementation of a computer-managed literacy program for Native communities throughout Canada funded and promoted by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada that appeared to contradict the recent *Aboriginal Literacy Action Plan* recommendations (1990). This document represented the views of educators of Native adults from across Canada, and in it they identified the "characteristics of good Native education programming". Among others, these included:

- Native literacy programs are community-based and controlled,
- use instructional strategies that stress group interaction and are consistent with the learners' cultural patterns,
- employ a whole language approach that emphasizes the use of student-generated material,
- are student-centred and recognize the needs and backgrounds of individual learners, and
- are culturally appropriate and contribute to the development of self-esteem and a positive Native identity.

While soliciting the views of educators of Native adults has considerable validity and merit, the most important people in Native literacy education, the potential literacy learners themselves, were still unconsulted and unheard. What were their views on the purposes, structure, content and methods of effective literacy programs designed for Native people?

After reviewing the literature on Native literacy, it was clear that these questions had not been systematically put to the potential learners themselves. Although resource books and literacy documents such as the *Native Literacy and Life Skills Curriculum Guidelines* (1984) and the *Aboriginal Literacy Action Plan* (1990) provide valuable background information on issues related to literacy, Native education and culture, they still fail to address this one basic research question: What do the potential learners have to say about literacy?

Specifically, we wanted to ask: What are the perceived purposes and values of literacy? What past barriers interfered with learning how to read and write? What do potential learners consider as a positive learning environment? What current barriers are there to their participation? It is our conviction that without taking this kind of information into account, it would be virtually impossible to set up a relevant, meaningful and useful literacy program in a Native community.

This report addresses these questions and relates them to current literacy theory and effective practices from the field. Chapter II provides an overview of two theoretical perspectives on literacy instruction and how they relate to the Native literacy issue. Chapter III presents the process and findings of a survey which was conducted in several Native communities in British Columbia that posed the above questions to potential literacy learners. Drawing from the results of this survey, as well as from current theories and practices of literacy instruction and research on existing Native literacy programs, Chapter IV presents an overview of innovative practices and illustrative programs. Chapter V serves as a conclusion to this project. We hope this information will be used by literacy instructors and programmers to create more effective and appropriate literacy programs for Native adults.

II. Literacy Theory and Practice

1. Canada and the Literacy/Illiteracy Issue

For many years illiteracy remained one of the most hidden social problems in Canada. Not until the mid 1970's was it fully recognized that this problem was not confined only to the Third World but also affected developed countries (Giere, 1987). In the last couple of years, illiteracy has acquired a prominent profile in this country. The private sector, the government and advocacy groups have now begun to combine their efforts to install literacy programs aimed at "eradicating" illiteracy from Canadian society.

This unprecedented involvement has been coupled with massive public awareness campaigns, the most far reaching and influential being the 1987 Southam Literacy Survey, which produced *Literacy in Canada: A Research Report* (1987) and *Broken Words* (Calamai, 1988). These publications have had and will continue to have great impact not only on the Canadian general public, but more importantly on officials in charge of defining government policies, on individuals in business deciding on the involvement of the private sector in literacy programs, on community organizations and educational institutions already involved or willing to become involved in the delivery of literacy programs, and on the educators themselves.

As Fagan (1988) points out, these reports offer a stereotyped profile of the illiterate adult. Calamai succeeds in alerting society to the fact that a significant percentage of the population lacks reading and writing skills. What is questionable is his presentation of illiteracy as an isolated phenomenon having a deterministic influence on the lives of those who cannot read or write. Repeatedly, we are presented with the sensational image of a "handicapped" adult whose life has been completely undermined by illiteracy and illiteracy alone. This results in a cause-effect conclusion: if these adults become literate, they will stop being the "lost souls" (Calamai) they have been until now.

This perspective is extended to include the well-being of the nation as a whole. Calamai sets out to show a direct relationship between literacy and the Canadian economy. According to his analysis, illiteracy is responsible for high industrial costs, inflated prices, reduced Canadian competitiveness in international markets and many other expenses to the government and corporate sectors. To put it in his own words, "Canada's illiteracy bill" is very high. (See Figure 1)

The "bill", which includes items strictly related to reduction of expenditures and profit making ("jail for frustrated illiterates" appearing as a high expense to the government), is ended with the item "blighted, unhappy lives for millions"; illiterates' lives are also given a dollar figure and added on as another expense to the government and corporate sectors.

The thinking behind this view is that literacy results in economic development and larger profits through increased productivity in the work place due to a better performance by literate workers. Increased consumption also results because of the higher income and improved skills of the working class.

Figure 1 *Canada's Illiteracy Bill*

Unnecessary UIC payments
Inflated consumer prices to cover mistakes
Extra medical and worker compensation charges
Tuition fees lost by illiterate students
Dwindling revenues for publishers
Subsidies for industry retraining
Wages lowered by illiteracy
Jail for frustrated illiterates
Lost taxes
Reduced international competitiveness
Blighted, unhappy lives for millions

GRAND TOTAL: $BILLIONS
(Calamai,1988, P.32)

The implications of this analysis are two-fold. On one hand, as Rockhill points out (1988), illiteracy is perceived as threat, handicap, failure, non-personhood, cost, offense and danger. On the other hand, literacy becomes equated with success, equality of opportunity and economic development. The formula is simple: let us get rid of the "illiterates" as soon as possible and the country will be free of threat and in a position to grow. Literacy is treated in a vacuum, outside the economic, historical, social, political and ideological phenomena in which it is embedded. The real class, race and gender differences and the power relations that account for such differences are hidden, concealed under the mask of the literacy/illiteracy dichotomy.

2. What Do Literacy Theoreticians Say?

- The Autonomous and Ideological Models of Literacy.

The analysis behind the concept of literacy/illiteracy presented by Calamai is what Brian Street (1984) calls "the autonomous model of literacy". This theoretical model views literacy as a value free technology that produces consistent results independent of the social context. The writers who subscribe to this model propose that the acquisition of the skills of reading and writing have significant cognitive consequences which result in the development of logical and abstract thinking, for individuals and for entire societies. Literacy in this model is associated with social and individual "progress" and economic development. Street mentions that according to Anderson (1966) a society requires at least 40% literacy rate for economic "take off", "a hypothesis that recurs with apparent authority in many literacy program outlines" (1984, p.2).

The proponents of the autonomous model generally make an analysis of human evolution from orality towards literacy as a single, linear continuum. They present literacy in a vacuum, giving little consideration to crucial economic, social, political and historical conditions that not only have served as the context for the introduction of writing in different cultures at different times, but that also continue to define its uses. As Street says, "The autonomous model isolates literacy as an independent variable and then claims to be able to study its consequences. These consequences are classically represented in terms of economic 'take off' or in terms of cognitive skills" (Street, 1984).

In opposition to these assumptions, Street proposes an "ideological model of literacy", which he identifies as having the following characteristics (1984, p.8):

1. It assumes that the meaning and practice of literacy depends upon the social structure of institutions in which literacy is embedded.

2. Literacy has political and ideological significance and it cannot, therefore, be helpfully separated from that significance and treated as though it were an "autonomous" thing.

3. The particular practices of reading and writing that are taught in any context depend upon such aspects as social structure and stratification... and the role of educational institutions....

4. How reading and writing is learned — the process — is what constructs the meaning of it for particular learners.

5. We would probably more appropriately refer to "literacies" than to any single "literacy".

The subscribers to the "ideological model" concentrate on the specific social practices of literacy and recognize the ideological and cultural nature of these practices; they stress "... the significance of the socialization process in the construction of the meaning of literacy for participants" (Street, 1984); they are concerned with all social institutions through which this process takes place; and they examine the interaction between the use of oral and written language, rather than emphasizing a "great divide" between oral and literate individuals and societies.

For the proponents of the ideological model, literacy is not considered to be autonomous from but interdependent with the context of socio-economic, historical and ideological conditions. Instead of arriving at universal conclusions, subscribers to the ideological model concentrate on the concrete practices of literacy in given communities, while recognizing their ideological and cultural nature.

An example of the ideological model is presented by Francis Kazemek (1990, 1988, 1985), who sees literacy as a personal, social, transactive and constructive process. Learners build meaning from a broad range of rich texts by bringing their background experience to the process. Literacy depends on particular purposes, particular texts, and the ability to relate to other written and unwritten texts. Literacy is viewed as an end in itself, having multiple applications and enriching learners' lives as they apply and integrate what they read.

For Kazemek, literacy is a long-term process incorporating the full range of language functions. Literacy cannot be acquired in six months, but is a lifelong process, for all of us, of expanding, developing, and reapplying our language skills to new and changing situations. Literacy is a way of shifting perspectives, of seeing the world from new and different vantage points, to move, as adult education pioneer Malcolm Knowles defines it, toward "maturity". This view sees the adult as a whole, complex person with many needs and capacities, as a producer rather than simply a consumer and functionary.

3. Implications for Literacy Programming and Instruction

3.1 Autonomous Model

When literacy is approached from the perspective of the autonomous model, i.e., as an isolated, measurable, uniform "thing", it acquires the characteristics of a commodity that, once obtained, can guarantee happiness, not only for the individual, but also for entire communities and for the nation as a whole. This concept has far reaching implications for literacy instruction:

1. The learners' cultural background, needs, interests and perceived values of literacy are ignored. It is assumed that everybody, everywhere and at any point in time desires to become literate for the same reasons, in order to pursue the same goals. Therefore, the learners have little or no input in program design.

2. The variability in oral and written language used in different social contexts, by different communities, is ignored. It is

assumed that there is one language to be learned by all learners, and there is no recognition of the differences in dialects that learners may bring with them.

3. Teaching/learning is seen as a linear, behavioural modification process. Emphasis is on error-free learning in small, well-prepared steps. The instructional response is the use of sequential skills presented in pre-packaged print or computer programs with students working in isolation from each other. Since they work at their own pace, this programming is considered "individualized". The wide variety of student learning styles is not considered.

4. The economic and social objectives of the wider society are paramount. There is therefore no need to integrate and utilize the local community needs, interests and resources in its own development and in literacy programming.

5. Literacy is something given to or done to adult learners. It emphasizes learner passivity and limited input.

6. Literacy training is a relatively short-term process that presents literacy as an essentially "informative" function — to report information and convey facts.

Viewing literacy from this perspective leads to questionable programs, especially for Native adults. It is based on doubtful assumptions, one of which is that literacy is simply a set of functional, workplace skills or, alternatively, a set of generalizable basic skills. This ignores research (Darkenwald, 1982; Beder and Valentine, 1990) that indicates there are many motivations for adult learners becoming involved in literacy programs, and that these vary from individual to individual and community to community. This "autonomous" view also assumes a direct link between literacy and employment, a link which cannot be demonstrated as many factors affect employment, literacy being just one of several. Another danger is that this position can lead to what Brazilian literacy educator Paulo Freire calls the "ideology of domination" — the perception of literacy learners as empty vessels to be filled, as objects to be manipulated, and as marginal individuals to be domesticated.

The autonomous perspective also leads to "crisis" statistics such as Calamai's and places the onus for their plight on the "illiterates", a kind of blaming the victims that is especially pernicious given the social and economic roots of illiteracy. This view inevitably leads to a practice of literacy training rather than literacy education. It tends to narrow possibilities of human development rather than open them up.

3.2 Ideological Model

Literacy practice based on ideological assumptions contrasts sharply with the autonomous model, especially in the areas of student role and input, the use of language, the relationship between the program and the community, and the teaching/learning process employed.

Practice in an ideological model would be characterized as follows:

1. It is assumed that the desire for literacy is personal and related to individual learners' cultural background, needs, interests and perceived value of literacy. Therefore literacy is not taught as the "surface control of print" but as "meaning making", a skill that is based on student input, and improves with practice over an extended time period.

2. It is assumed that the imaginative and personal functions of language and its context are diverse, reflecting the social and political nature of language. Narrative is seen as a natural basis for literacy education.

3. Teaching/learning is not the transferrance of literacy subskills but the construction and sharing of real text for real purposes. Therefore discussion groups, learning circles, co-operative learning and one-to-one tutoring are employed as teaching techniques. The learning and testing of subskills – which are rarely transferrable to actual application – are de-emphasized.

4. It is assumed that literacy is embedded in the community. Therefore opportunities for community input to programming and meaningful community-based reading and writing are emphasized in action groups, workplace issue groups, writing workshops, book sharing circles, etc.

5. The content highlights all language functions -- the plurality of literacy is recognized, as well as the plurality of motivations.

6. The context and form of literacy education reflect the social, dialogic, and political nature of literacy and language.

The research of Brian Street (1984), Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole (1981), Shirley Brice-Heath (1983), and Harvey Graff (1979, 1987) has shown that the use of oral and written language in any given community is interdependent with contextual conditions. The needs and motivations for acquiring the skills of reading and writing vary between and within communities, depending on social, historical and economic conditions. Shirley Brice-Heath has shown that school programs have not recognized, validated or built on the language uses of non-mainstream students. These ideas become particularly relevant when dealing with Native people, who may be speakers of non-standard dialects of English, or speakers of English as a second language.

Researchers have also examined the shaping of what they call an "ideology of literacy": the perceived values that a given society sees in the knowledge of reading and writing. Harvey Graff (1979), for example, argues that in nineteenth century Ontario all social classes shared a particular ideology of literacy, i.e. a high estimation of the educational and moral values that the acquisition of reading and writing skills would create. However, he shows that schooled, literate women, blacks and Irish Catholics did not have opportunities for social advancement in this society, in spite of their high levels of literacy. Thus, he claims that other factors, such as class, ethnic background and gender had a much stronger impact on opportunities for social and economic mobility than did schooling or literacy per se.

An ideological perspective leads to programs that recognize the personal and social context of literacy, that validate the individual while drawing on his or her background and language. Such programs recognize that adult learners are motivated by many different and overlapping goals and aspirations, and works to accommodate these diverse motivations. These programs reflect an understanding of the political nature of literacy and language and stress dialogue and the sharing of real language for real purposes. They understand that literacy means learning new ways to think and act and they are genuinely community-based, opening up to learners a fuller scope of human development.

4. Literacy and Native Adults

The disproportionately high level of illiteracy for Native adults is amply documented. Though grade levels do not correspond to actual literacy levels, they do suggest the potential and relative literacy problems that may exist. In the case of Native people nearly 40% of registered Indians have completed less than grade 9, more that twice the national average (see Table 1). For on-reserve Indians, the figure is 44.5%. Similarly, 73% of Native people in Canada have not completed high school (compared with less than 45% for the country as a whole), and the figure for on-reserve Native people is almost 80%.

It is clear that Native people have not participated in schools to the same extent as other Canadians and that their experiences while in school have not been as successful. Explanations for this have been many and varied: some have claimed that Native people are culturally and linguistically "deprived", a few cite lack of motivation and absenteeism, and others have concentrated on the mismatch between the teaching styles used in schools and the learning styles of Native children.

While it is not the objective of this report to offer yet another explanation for the unsuccessful school experiences of Native people, it is our conviction that a variety of factors present in traditional schools have failed to prepare students for adult life in Native or non-Native communities. Of these factors, two play key roles in any learning situation and are particularly relevant to this report: content of the curriculum and methods used. As Toohey (1982) points out, "For many Native people the problem is the failure of the school to transmit useful and non-alienating knowledge and skills. The failure is not the students' lack of achievement, but the content of the curriculum and the way it is transmitted."

The use of pre-packaged programs with Native adults illustrates the problems that Toohey perceives as being at the base of failure of the educational system: the transmission of irrelevant, alienating knowledge in an ineffective, alienating manner. Nonetheless, government

Table 1

Percentage of Registered Indian and General Populations with Less than Grade 9 Education in Canada and the Provinces /Territories, 1986.

Province/Territory	On Reserve	Off Reserve	Total	General Population
Nova Scotia	38.5	22.3	34.9	20.7
New Brunswick & P.E.I.	36.2	28.7	34.5	23.
Quebec	50.6	28.3	46.1	23.8
Ontario	35.5	21.4	29.1	14.5
Manitoba	52.7	27.6	44.2	17.4
Saskatchewan	50.9	28.9	43.0	18.4
Alberta	44.8	20.1	35.1	10.5
British Columbia	35.5	22.4	29.8	11.0
Yukon	43.7	28.7	35.6	7.5
NWT	65.9	51.3	60.4	28.8
Canada	44.5	24.8	37.1	17.1

Source: INAC customized data based on 1986 Census of Canada.

sponsored programs have tended to favour the use of either print or computer-based pre-packaged curricula in Native communities. Two examples of how this approach to literacy has had concrete manifestations in the creation and implementation of programs in Native communities are the widely used print-based Laubach Literacy Program and the Pathfinder Learning System, a "computer-managed learning system" presently in use in several Native communities under the sponsorship of the Economic Development Branch of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission.

The Federal Government has tended to draw policies that subordinate the question of literacy instruction to vocational programs sponsored by Canada Employment and Immigration Commission or the Economic Development Branch of the Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs. Thomas (1983, p.64) points out, when referring to the process of policy setting with regards to adult basic education that,

> The Federal Government's focus was on training for the labour force and a limit of 52 weeks was placed on the academic upgrading component ... The limited time allowances and restricted objectives set by the federal government for ABE programmes have been a continuing source of frustration for those ABE instructors and administrators who are trying to meet the educational needs of adults with less than elementary schooling (1983, p. 64).

Klassen (1987, p.24), writing about the mismatch between learners' needs and the actual content of literacy programs, concludes that:

> Standards of functionality (of literacy) are often determined and defined, not according to the actual uses the people who are non-readers and writers have in their everyday lives, but according to pre-set generalized notions of competence which stem from the social and political agendas established by those who provide the programs.

5. Summary

Literacy research has important implications for literacy practice with Native adults.The traditional approach to literacy and adult basic education as the learning of a set of pre-determined skills in order to gain employment is deeply engrained not only in the minds and policies of program funders and programmers, but also in those of instructors and, more importantly, many learners. The current "official ideology" of literacy and literacy instruction has made its way into the minds of many sectors of the population. This may account for the relative popularity of some pre-packaged programs which present a linear, smooth, preconstructed road towards easily identifiable goals. Many times they become the only alternative for communities unable to find funding sources other than the official ones and unaware of the existence of other ways of approaching literacy instruction.

III. The Survey

1. Research Process

In approaching this survey, the researchers looked at various models for developing an appropriate, respectful, and effective process. The model that seemed most practical and suitable (see Appendix A) was outlined in *Community-Based Research: A Handbook for Native Americans* (Guyette, 1983). The simplicity and logic of this model combined with the author' concern that the results of any community-based research must serve the communities themselves and be "a strong tool for community development", made this model particularly attractive. In practice we found the steps described (though naturally overlapping and recursive) precisely those that we needed to proceed through.

1.1 Purpose

Statistics indicate that Native adults have disproportionately low school completion rates. Fewer than half as many Native people have completed grade 9 as for Canada as a whole — and it is reasonable to assume that the problem of illiteracy is particularly acute among the Native population. But too often literacy educators, responding to these "crisis" figures, make assumptions about the nature of the problem and its solution without conferring with the people involved. Inappropriate and ineffective programs have been the result. The purpose of this study was to go to potential Native adult literacy learners themselves and ask them what they wanted out of literacy instruction, what had gotten in the way in the past, what present barriers kept them out of programs and what learning conditions they would most prefer.

The principle was simple — start from the learner. While computer-based and conventional programs alike are popping up in Native communities across B.C. and Canada, rarely have these programs been preceded by a systematic assessment of what the learners want from a literacy program. In fact, the methods, content and structure of such programs have been supported by almost no research of any kind (e.g. reading, composition, linguistics). Often programs and materials are used simply because they are attractive, easy to use and thought to work. Rarely are they supported by a theoretical or research base.

Furthermore, little or no substantial research has been conducted that focuses specifically on the needs and aspirations of potential Native literacy learners in general. It was our purpose to collect, analyze and report the perceptions of Native adults toward literacy instruction so that conscientious Native literacy programmers would have relevant data and guidelines to inform their programs and make them more effective and appropriate.

A secondary purpose was to devise a tool that could be used at the community level by community adult educators to reveal the motivations and needs of their students. This study is an expanded version of what could — and probably should — precede the creation of community-based literacy programs.

1.2 Goals

Our goal was to provide some general principles and guidelines for mounting effective Native literacy programs. To do this we had to begin by identifying a representative cross-section of potential Native literacy learners — Native adults whose reading skills made it difficult or impossible for them to read a newspaper for example — who were not in any literacy or adult education program, and through an interview schedule, establish quantitative and qualitative data in four main areas:

1. The purposes and perceived value of literacy
2. Past barriers to learning to read and write
3. Positive learning environment
4. Current barriers to participation

1.3 Other Surveys

An examination of the literature showed that not only have the potential Native learners' literacy perspectives and aspirations been ignored, but that virtually all non-participants' views have gone largely unexamined. Given that estimates of participation in formal adult programs in North America vary from only 4.25% (Reder, 1985) to 11.6% (Darkenwald, 1982) of the adult population, this seems quite remarkable. Most studies of adults' purposes and motivations regarding adult education have instead focused almost entirely on those people already participating in formal programs. Notable exceptions are Arlene Fingeret's work (1982, 1983, 1984) and Beder (1990).

For Native Indians, the only North American study that begins to address the issue of Native adult literacy is McQuiston & Brod's (1981) extensive study of Indian adult education circumstances and needs in the U.S. While this report was certainly exhaustive (their interview schedule consisted of a possible 492 questions, and more than 4000 individuals were surveyed), the data it produced primarily described the educational levels of American Native adults, their levels of satisfaction with their education, and their participation rate in formal adult programs. Although these data led the researches to make important recommendations—especially in regard to Indian self-determination in adult education—and suggested some major reasons for Native adults' relatively low educational levels, the survey did not focus on what non-participating Native people wanted from literacy programs.

To find suitable research models, then, we had to look to studies that focused on purposes, motivations and barriers related by learners already in programs. Darkenwald's *Adult Education: Foundations of Practice* (1982) provided background information and findings from several research surveys, and Beder's work, especially "Motivational Profiles of Adult Basic Education Students" (Beder & Valentine, 1990), helped identify appropriate motivational categories. Charnley & Jones' British study (1979) similarly provided elaboration of motivational categories as well as reporting ideas. All these provided important perspectives on designing appropriate survey instruments and included some interesting baseline measurements for comparison to our sample results.

1.4 Survey Design and Sampling Methods

Only an interview schedule administered by trained interviewers could obtain the data we sought. Using the principles of survey research (Guyette, 1983) and the Charnley & Jones and Darkenwald examples, we decided to conduct interviews with seven geographically representative communities around the province

Although regional areas were established to reflect geographical balance, specific communities were chosen for a variety of reasons (e.g. prior relationships of interviewers, proximity to interviewers, and support from local band officials). The final categories and communities selected were:

Category	Communities	Interviewer
Coastal	Kitkatla	Susan Strachan
Interior semi-urban	South Shuswap (several bands)	Art Napoleon Don Sawyer
Interior rural	Moberley Lake	Art Napoleon
Urban	Vancouver	Carmen Rodriguez
Interior semi-rural	Nicola Valley (several bands)	Susan Strachan
Coastal semi-rural	Fraser Valley (several bands)	Teresa Campbell
Rural isolated	Halfway	Art Napoleon

We decided to solicit views from eight people in each community, giving us data from a total of 56 respondents from across the province in a variety of community situations.

Identifying the individuals to interview in each community was problematic. We knew we wanted respondents who had difficulty reading and writing and were not in adult education programs, so we first devised a simple reading test to quickly establish relative reading skills. This was administered to each potential respondent to establish a literacy level.

The test consisted of three samples of text at approximately grades 2, 4 and 6 levels. While it is recognized that grade levels have little or no meaning when discussing adult literacy, we needed to make some differentiation for demographic purposes and to eliminate those potential respondents who had no difficulty with any piece, thus putting them beyond our target group. Interviewers asked respondents to choose the most difficult piece they felt they could read comfortably, were asked to read it silently or aloud, and were then asked several basic comprehension questions.

In several cases we relied on local informants— such as education coordinators or their staff members — to find the potential respondents. In helping us find appropriate respondents, local contacts were asked to identify adults who they felt might have difficulty reading a newspaper. Because most of the interviewers had contacts in the bands selected, this process proved less difficult than we had anticipated. It must be acknowledged that we would have been unable to have completed the survey without the assistance of local contacts and the general cooperation of the selected communities.

1.5 Design of the Instrument

After establishing the methodology to be used, the survey team designed the survey instrument (see Appendix B).

We decided on a combination of open-ended questions, primarily to collect qualitative data, and several more specific "forced choice" questions constructed to obtain quantitative data. The four categories of information we sought— purposes and perceived value of literacy education, past barriers to learning to read and write, positive learning environment, and current barriers to participation — were finalized, and specific questions designed.

For the section on the purposes of literacy we established eight possibilities: knowledge, personal, family, community, instrumental, economic, entertainment, and culture. These represented the purposes used in the Carp et. al. study (cited in Darkenwald, 1982) combined with our own perceptions and elements identified in Charnley & Jones (1979) and Beder & Valentine (1990). To obtain this crucial information, three approaches were used: unprompted open-ended questions, rating each of the eight categories from one to five in terms of importance, and selecting one of the eight as the most important purpose.

Past barriers to literacy were explored through open-ended questions accompanied by some suggested probes, as was the section on positive learning environment. To explore current barriers to participation, we started with Darkenwald's four classifications of barriers — situational, institutional, informational and psychosocial. Using his specifics supplemented by those from Beder (1990) and our own experience, we established a list of 26 potential barriers that respondents simply indicated as applying or not applying to their situation.

1.6 Pretest and Revision of Survey Instrument

Once the survey was constructed, examined and revised, a trial test was arranged in a single community. The results of this test were encouraging: the respondent reactions were positive, the schedule took between 20 and 40 minutes to administer, as we had hoped, and the data obtained were sufficient and specific enough to be useful.

Some adjustments were required. Redundant questions were eliminated, an interviewer response sheet was added, and the wording of some of the questions was revised and clarified. Interviewer instructions were also made more clear, and ideas for interviewer orientation were identified.

1.7 Staff Training, Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting

Based on the results of the trial, the five interviewers were oriented. This consisted of a thorough review of the interviewer's role and potential ways of biasing responses, discussion of recording techniques, a review of the piloter's experiences, role plays, a question-by-question examination of the interview schedule, and the discussion of possible problems.

All interviews were conducted between the end of May and end of August of 1990. Most were conducted in the respondent's home or in the home of a friend or family member, but some were conducted at pow wows, in the street, and in restaurants and bars. Over that period interviewers administered the 56 interviews in the selected communities. The response sheets were collected, the rough data tabulated, and the data were analyzed.

2. Limitations of the Study.

This study is clearly a preliminary exploration of the questions surrounding Native literacy. For a variety of reasons, the sample in this survey does not fully reflect the demographics of Native non-literates. This is evident in the male to female ratio (3:2) and the average age (38.62). It is almost certain that at least as many females as males have difficulty reading, and the average age of potential literacy learners would likely be considerably higher than 40. An important segment of potential literacy learners — the elders — was largely absent. Based on interviewers' reports, this was probably due to the relative reluctance of elders to volunteer to speak about their situation with outsiders. We tried to avoid this problem by using Native interviewers where possible (four of the seven communities) and having a community member accompany (or at least introduce) the interviewer. Based on our results, we feel there is a need for more localized community-based research in this area using community members as the interviewers.

Several interviewers' notes and comments indicated the difficulty of finding respondents. In one case even though a community contact was used, as many potential respondents refused to be interviewed as agreed. In Vancouver, the problem was heightened by the lack of a clearly defined community. Prince Rupert, originally identified as a northern urban population sample, had to be abandoned when we were unable to identify enough respondents. The use of local community contacts in four communities (in three cases interviewers were community members) meant easier entry into communities. On the other hand, reliance on these contact people meant selection was largely left to them. Whether they tended to select respondents that were more comfortable with outsiders or were nearer their own age is impossible to know.

We also found that the structure of the interview instrument presented limitations. Some respondents found some of the questions redundant, and the form " a little intimidating." Some interviewers found it necessary to discuss the issues informally, asking the questions "then filling in the form later." As well, some of the questions were unintentionally leading. Question II.2, for example, "What didn't you like about school", presupposes a dislike for school. While we were trying to identify the factors in the respondents' school experience that militated against academic success, we should have balanced the issue by asking "What did you like about school?"

Nonetheless, interviewers' notes indicate that most respondents — after some initial hesitation — responded enthusiastically and even eagerly to the questions. They often welcomed the chance to expand on their responses, providing stories and incidents from their past. We feel the data collected — and especially the anecdotal information — provide some very real and important perspectives on what potential Native literacy learners want from literacy programs, what has gotten and continues to get in their way, and what educational environments they prefer.

3. Findings

3.1. Demographics

The 56 potential Native literacy learners interviewed were distributed evenly, eight to a community. Of these respondents,

1. 34 were male
2. 22 were female
3. the total average age was 38.62 (with a low of 16 and a high of 75)
4. the average last grade attended was 5.49 (with a low of 0 and a high of 8 and an exceptional case of 11)
5. 4 had no reading skills
6. 23 were level 1 (grade - 2)
7. 21 were level 2 (grade - 4)
8. 8 were level 3 (grade - 6)

3.2 Purposes and Perceived Value of Literacy

Literacy planners rarely question whether adults with limited reading and writing skills actually want to improve their skills. The idea that they might be functioning quite happily and effectively with their limited skills appears unthinkable. But Arlene Fingeret (1984) and Sheryl Gowen (1990) point out that non-literates are not dysfunctional members of a literate society but functioning adults with enormous skills that are often an important part of the web of mutual obligation in their communities. For some, literacy acquisition may just seem unnecessary — more trouble than it's worth; for others it may actually pose a threat by dislodging them from their position within the community structure.

In this study, lack of interest in literacy acquisition was only slightly indicated (7%) by the results. Fifty respondents answered "yes" to the question "Would you like to read and write better?" with four saying no and two giving neutral responses. There was no way of determining how badly people wanted to improve their literacy. The question did not gauge commitment but only interest.

Research into the motivation of adults to enrol in adult education programs (Beder & Valentine, 1990; Charnley & Jones, 1979; Houle, 1961; Boshier, 1971) has done much to cement the understanding that adult student motivation for educational involvement is enormously varied. While various categories of learners and their motivations have been developed, the real value of the literature is in its insistence that adult education students are a heterogeneous bunch and that adult education means different things to different participants. As Beder & Valentine (1990) put it, an "understanding of the motivations of ABE students will provide information about how learners hope to benefit from literacy education and, through inference, how ABE programs can best help learners achieve those benefits."

Assuming with Darkenwald (1982) that "The motivational orientations of distinctive subpopulations of adults...might well differ from those of the general public", this investigation into the motives of potential Native literacy learners provides some suggestions on how to accommodate, attract and engage this population.

To obtain this information, a series of open-ended and forced-answer questions were presented to the respondents. Their response to the first question, "What would you be able to do with better reading and writing skills", indicated the extraordinary range of literacy needs in the Native adult community and at the same time provided insight into the limitations Native adults feel.

For some, reading better was especially important:

- Read and understand wider variety of things... I'd like to do lots of reading at home.
- I would like to be able to read what I want.

Writing was often associated with government transactions and personal needs:

- Able to understand government forms.
- Deal with legal papers and government deals. To be able to write to government, etc.
- I'd just like to read and write better for filling out forms and such. It's very important.
- I'd like to write proposals and stuff.
- To go to workshops and take notes. I work with kids and I'd like to be able to spell their names. I'd like to write in my journal.
- I'm involved in Indian politics again and I have to ask for help to write letters.

A surprising number of respondents felt they would be able to speak and understand more:

- Understand things better, speak English better.
- I know some big words, what they mean, but I can't pronounce them.
- Help me understand people and what they're talking about.
- I always end up using dictionaries or asking people.

Others had more varied responses:

- Find my way around.
- Write down history and culture, which is dying out.
- I'm a farmer; if I ran into a problem I'd like to find out what to do about it.
- I could cash my own cheques from carving, and get my kids back.

The same diversity was found in respondents' answers to the question, "What problems do you encounter now because you don't read and write as well as you'd like to?" This question was designed to focus respondents on the actual situational difficulties they were presently encountering, and it produced some very specific examples of the daily struggles of Native adults with limited literacy skills.

Many respondents spoke of their dependency on others:

- I need help with letters and forms cause I don't understand them.
- My daughters fill everything out for me.
- I have to ask other people for help.
- Need someone else to read mail.
- Have to have a note when travelling.
- I have to ask my husband to read to me, or my kids. I get frustrated.

Others reported general uncertainty and confusion:

- Can't understand things I'm trying to read. Can't understand things happening in the world news.
- I'm always confused and unsure about things.
- I can't understand high English.

Several indicated a need to acquire improved literacy skills for specific and personal reasons:

- Read to kids. Read cookbooks.

- How to spell big words or put them on paper.
- Can't read labels - contents/measurements. Can't read mail.
- There are things that I read, and when it gets difficult I skip over it. I wish I could read straight through.
- I can't get a good year-round job.
- Get a job so I can have my kids.
- I can't cash cheques alone, so everybody borrows money.
- People think I'm stupid because I don't talk too good, but I'm not.

Not surprisingly, responses to the question "What can people in your community who read and write well do that you cannot?" tended to be the reverse of the previous responses — "they can do what I can't." But the intent of the question was to attempt to place literacy in a community context, to ask respondents to look at reading and writing in terms of what it enabled those that wrote and read well in their community to do that respondents could not. Some of the responses provided insight into this issue:

One response seemed to summarize the respondents' feelings:

- Life in general is much easier for people who read and write.

Several indicated that increased skills allowed others to be more involved in the community:

- Be more involved and informed. Understand band meetings and business.
- Go to band meetings.
- They're working in the band office and I'm not.

Several linked better literacy skills to improved work opportunities and performance:

- They can get better jobs and understand things more.
- They know how to run business and the band office.

- Get jobs more easily.

- They can understand things. Perform their work well.

Others were particularly sensitive to the fact that those with better reading and writing skills were simply better informed:

- They understand things on paper that are foreign to me.

- They are better informed.

- They can read kids' school notes.

- They know a lot of things I can't understand.

But the most common response recognized the increased independence of those with better skills:

- Drive cars, have money all the time, read to kids and do everything themselves. They have freedom.

- Don't have to ask for others' help.

- Don't need welfare or someone to help them.

- Travel alone, write letters, read important papers.

Two responses indicate the range of feelings on this issue:

- Not much.

- Just about everything.

The next question had three sections, each designed to obtain similar information. The first section was an open-ended question: "If you were to read and write better, what would be your reasons for doing so?" This question made no suggestions and allowed the subject to provide his or her own response. The results again underscored the enormous diversity of literacy purposes.

For some, literacy acquisition was an end on itself:

- Just to read and write better and be better educated and informed.

- I want to learn. I want to get more out of what I read.

For most, there were other purposes. Many of these were related to personal and social goals:

- Better socializing; able to understand others.
- I had my baby at 14, then she had a baby at 14, I want to learn more, get a good job and help my grandson with his future goals. I have to understand them.
- Feel better about myself.
- To be smarter, to have a good future.
- Learn to express myself. Be a spokesperson.

Some purposes identified related to the family and community:

- Help the kids with their homework.
- Help elders with forms and writing. To be more effective.

And many purposes related more specifically to personal economic and practical goals:

- To take vocational training.
- To get drivers license.
- I might get a job that pays good money and get my own place with my kids.
- Get a good job, get a car and travel with my grandchild to pow-wows.
- To read things. Fill out forms and understand people when they talk.

The second section of this question asked subjects to rate the importance of eight categories of reading and writing goals. They were asked to do this by having the interviewer read out the eight goals, with examples, and then rank the goals from one to five, with five being very important, in terms of how important the goals were to the subject.

Here the options are limited and specific, and the results are very revealing (see Table 2).

The most striking aspect of these results is the strength of virtually all the goals. We must conclude that reasons for would-be learners getting involved in reading and writing programs are varied, and many are felt strongly. Compared to U.S. national samples (Carp et.al in Darkenwald, 1982), both the patterns and strengths differ dramatically. For example, while personal factors in Carp's sample were rated as very important by 37% of respondents, family by 30%, and economic by 25%, and culture by only 14%, these figures were at least double for our Native sample. In the case of culture, the figure was more than triple the Carp result.

The top placement of personal goals, with more than 3/4 of the respondents identifying this as very important, indicates the importance of what Charnley & Jones (1979) call "affective personal achievements" for Native adult would-be learners, suggesting a strong desire for "greater confidence." This confidence is characterized by Charnley and Jones as confidence in "bearing, being at ease within oneself, to make personal reassessments, to weigh evidence, and to be self reliant," all of which are evidenced by increased self-assurance.

It should be noted that the results in Table 2 are based on a question that allowed respondents to name more than one reason for entering reading and writing programs. When respondents were forced to choose only one goal — to identify the single most important objective for them — the results were quite different (Table 3).

What is particularly interesting about these figures is the marked preference for instrumental goals and the elevation of economic goals. In the case of instrumental goals, it appears that, faced with a choice, the instrumental category seemed to be the broadest and most inclusive. In explaining why they chose instrumental goals, respondents included aspects that might have been slotted into other categories:

- I want to do everything for myself, not asking anyone to write or read something for me.
- I want to do things for myself.
- To be better informed, aware and knowledgeable.

Table 2: Percentage of Respondents Identifying Goals as "Very Important"

Goal	% Identifying as "Very Important"
1. Personal (To Feel better about yourself, to be happier and more self-reliant)	77
2. Knowledge (To become better informed, to be better at reading and writing)	71
3. Instrumental (To be able to deal more effectively with doing tasks such as filling out forms, reading signs, writing cheques, etc.)	71
4. Economic (To get a job or better job; to do your job better; to make more money)	66
5. Family (To get along with family members; to be a better parent/grandparent)	64
6. Community (To understand community problems better and contribute to their solutions; to be more active in your community)	50
7. Culture (To study your culture; to write down stories and pass on cultural information)	45
8. Entertainment (To read stories and magazines; to get pleasure and entertainment from reading and writing)	36

Table 3: Number of Respondents Choosing Goals as Being "Most Important to You"

Goal	Number
1. Instrumental	19
2. Economic	10
3. Family	9
4. Culture	5
5. Knowledge	4
6. Personal	4
7. Community	3
8. Entertainment	0
9. Other (Politics; Self-learning)	2

Clearly for these respondents, "being able to deal more effectively with daily tasks" results in both personal and knowledge goals. In view of the range of instrumental objectives articulated in earlier questions — everything from writing and reading letters to filling in forms to settling property deals — it seems clear that instrumental goals mean many different things to different people.

It is also clear that the inclusiveness of the instrumental category (equitable to the term "functional" literacy in much of the literature) presents several problems for the literacy instructor and programmer. In the instrumental or functional area, the need to learn a specific task is based on two factors — demand and skill deficiency (Hayes & Valentine, 1989). Focusing on the latter can give instructors a skewed perspective on learner needs; only the learner is in a position to determine the need for specific skills in his or her life.

This situation is illustrated through the comments made by respondents regarding their literacy needs and the purposes of literacy skills for them. These comments indicate the enormous range of instrumental literacy needs in the Native adult population sampled. As Hayes & Valentine (1989) state,

> If adult educators are dedicated to the notion of life-relevant instruction, they had best come to terms with the fact that relevance and functionality are highly personal — and probably highly transient — constructs that are impossible to determine without frank and continuous communication with learners.

The responses in the category of economic goals are equally complex. Darkenwald observes, "When adults have been asked to give the single most important reason for their enrolling in a course ..., work-related motives emerged as dominant." He cites a study by the National Centre for Education Statistics, which indicated that 41.8% of the subjects chose the response "to improve or advance in current job" to explain why they were taking courses. The nearest secondary factor was personal or family interests at 27.7%.

These figures do not correlate with our data. Only 17.9% of the respondents in the current survey identified economic goals as their primary motive for becoming involved in literacy programs. Combined with earlier responses, this would suggest that, while important, economic motivations may be less compelling to Native adults than the population as a whole. It would also be interesting to explore the reasons that respondents chose economic goals. Was the fact that the sample was tilted toward younger men a factor? When a single choice has to made, does the socially-implied stress on literacy and employment become more predominant?

Perhaps most importantly, these findings suggest that rarely are learners motivated by a single factor. In this survey, when respondents were allowed to rank several factors, six of the eight goals were rated as being very important by 50% or more of the subjects. The results of asking potential learners to choose a single primary motivational factor may lead to a simplistic view of students' real goals, which are generally complex and varied.

As pointed out in the literature, (Beder & Valentine, 1990), motivations vary according to backgrounds, social and personal circumstances (such as age, employment, family status, income, attitudes and beliefs, etc.), Beder & Valentine divided adult learners into six subcategories based on socio-demographic data, and demonstrated how the different clusters ranked ten motivational factors dramatically differently. It is safe to assume that while in this survey some variability of responses has been eliminated by focusing on Native adults, generalizations to even this population are difficult. Purposes of literacy for Native adults, as with all adults, will change as life situations change. And "Only by understanding and responding to the expressed motivations of learners can we hope to make ABE congruent with the social meaning learners attach to literacy and literacy instruction" (Beder & Valentine, 1990, p. 94).

3.3 Past Barriers to Learning to Read and Write

In gathering data on why potential Native adult learners did not learn to read and write better, we planned to explore some of the personal, social, cultural and educational blocks that present barriers to Native people's literacy success. Such information could be crucial in understanding what needs to be done to make educational programs more responsive to Native people and to better recognize and address their resistance to, frustration with, and distrust of educational programs.

We asked, "Why do you think you didn't learn to read and write better when you were younger?", and a pattern of complex barriers emerged from the responses. Some of these were clearly personal, rooted in dysfunctional homes and families:

- I had many personal problems coming from an alcoholic home. I started drinking and ended up getting kicked out of school.
- I was always too sleepy or stoned to go to school much; nobody paid attention to me going to school or not.

Several mentioned foster homes specifically:

- I spent a lot of time moving around, foster homes.
- I was in white foster homes. I didn't want to be there so I got married to escape.

Some of the personal problems seemed firmly rooted in poverty and the struggle to survive:

- Had hard times and family problems during depression. I left school to survive.
- I didn't go to school very much, stayed home. My dad was a logger and mom worked at canneries.
- I didn't go to school very much and then I started working in the cannery.

A large number talked about the inappropriateness, insensitivity and boredom of the schools:

- I could not learn by listening. I found things easier to understand when things are on the blackboard.
- I was too afraid to say anything.
- I didn't listen in school; I always got sent home because I fell asleep.
- Thought I was deaf, I couldn't keep up.
- I was a slow learner. I daydreamed, didn't pay attention. It was boring, it was hard.

- They told me I was a slow learner.
- School was not my style.

Others spoke of a more direct and vicious kind of racism:

- At school everybody picked on me because I'm an Indian. The kids made fun because I was slow at learning English and then the teacher picked on me and at home I'd get a licking too.

Several respondents mentioned residential schools specifically — and the active resistance that respondents employed to escape their oppression:

- I went to residential school — I went to school two hours a day. Three hours of church. Four hours in farm work. Every chance I got I took off across the river even if I had to swim it.
- I resisted the residential school system. I did not want to get brainwashed into becoming white. I had my own culture.

Another category of obstacles were more clearly and specifically related to culture — the mismatch between the culture of the home and community and the culture of the school:

- I was brought up traditionally. I spoke Shuswap. Was confused at school.
- I lived with my grandparents and they didn't think it was as important as learning to live Indian.

The next series of questions was designed to focus specifically on respondents' school experiences to identify those aspects of the educational structure that pushed them out with inadequate skills. The questions "Did you go to school? How did you like school? What didn't you like about school?" produced some of the most extensive and revealing responses in the entire survey. Fifty-four subjects interviewed had attended school, and two had not.

Many respondents spoke bitterly of their school experiences:

- I didn't really care for school. Waste of time. I'd rather be trapping or something. Too far to walk anyway.

- All the Indian kids hung around fighting the white kids, and the teachers blamed the Indians.

- Not my style. No freedom. Do not like schedules. It was hard to get used to sitting in class when I could be doing things.

- Didn't like school. Don't like sitting around. It is meaningless. Felt alienated.

- I experienced belittlement. I was singled out and labelled slow.

- I felt lonely because everyone said that I was stupid or slow.

- I knew I didn't know anything, but they still passed me. They didn't care because I was Indian.

- Being forced into the Occupational Program was degrading. I thought I was intelligent, but instead I was labelled slow.

- I didn't like the way I was taught. It was different from being taught by grandparents. Different culture.

- I resented school. Did not like what was happening. There was a lot of racism. Could not speak Shuswap. English only.

Residential school experiences were recalled with special resentment:

- Residential school was like the prisons I've been to. Racism, sexual abuse, regimentation. Ran away, couldn't put up with it any longer. Then I just got into trouble as a young person, you know — alcohol and all.

- If I started talking Indian they knocked the hell out of me. Everything I know I learned on my own. The girls. Even if I talked to my own sister I got a licking for it.

- I didn't like school, I didn't like the nuns. They were against Indians speaking the language and our beliefs.

- Attended convent. They taught math and religion. They were working on converting. Not a good experience.

Not all oppression was met with passive resistance or simply quitting:

- The teachers got mad and made me feel dumb. When they hit me with a ruler I grabbed it and broke it.

- The school was 19 miles away. We had to take the bus. I fought in the bus, I fought at school because of discrimination. Nobody stood up for me. The grandparents were old and said, "Take it", but I fought back and nobody stood up for me. It's an awful feeling; I still have it. But I stood up for my kids and they all have an education now.

Some respondents had mixed reactions to their school experiences, and their comments seem to suggest the confusions and conflict they felt:

- I liked it, but there was a lot of prejudice and abuse at the residential school. If you didn't do your work you got hit on the head. If you didn't take your cod liver oil they hit you. I was told I was dumb and made to feel bad about myself.
- School was O.K. generally. Thing I didn't like was there was not enough encouragement or demandingness. I was undisciplined.
- I enjoyed school in Moberly — the teachers were good. I didn't like the discipline — punishment, straps, humiliation.
- The kids were mean, the white kids, so I always got into fights, but I liked the classrooms.
- I guess it was alright; the teachers kept forgetting who I was. It seemed like people didn't like Indians too much, but I didn't really care.
- Yes, I liked it. But the strap, standing in corner, manner of the teachers made me feel dumb.
- It was O.K. Kids used to pick fights with me so I'd beat them up and I'd get kicked out. The teachers didn't like me. They'd make me feel stupid if I wasn't paying attention.

Yet several subjects spoke fondly of their school experiences:

- I liked it, I never missed a day. Had no problems at all in school. (Small federal day-school on reserve.)
- I enjoyed school.
- I liked school, it was really great.
- I liked residential school, but when I got to public school things fell apart.

The question "Why did you leave school?" was intended to establish specific reasons — personal, educational, and economic — that forced students out of the educational system. Responses again suggest the complex of factors that push Native students out of school.

Most respondents cited personal reasons for leaving school:

- I felt better at home. I knew how to do things at home.
- I didn't really leave, I just didn't go very much. Just kind of drifted around.
- I was pregnant, ridiculed and had no support system. I lived on the street.
- I was having problems with alcohol at the time.
- We kept moving around, so I just quit and started running around downtown.
- I got bored and started skipping out then I started baby-sitting and quit.
- Didn't get along with white people or Chinese. I met a lot of prejudiced people.
- I thought getting married and having kids was the answer.
- I was just too confused.
- I went to prison.

Several cited reasons that related specifically to family concerns and issues:

- When I went to my grandfather's house he lived too far away and nobody came to make me go to school. I didn't care.
- Had to look after my aunt due to illness.
- I baby-sat my sister and brothers.
- I guess because I had to work supporting my grandparents, and school wasn't important as fishing and hunting.

Economic demands were reported as the major factor in deciding to leave school for some respondents:

- I got on at the cannery and worked with my sisters and mom.
- I also had to make a living.

The final question in this section — "Do you think your negative school experiences affected your learning to read and write?" — was intended to help identify more clearly the link between negative school experiences (which most subjects reported) and their literacy acquisition. We were looking for the school mechanisms, from the respondents' point of view, that hindered their literacy learning. Although some of the responses tended to repeat earlier complaints, some new focus was also provided.

Most of the comments focused on the failure of the schools and curriculum:

- I guess so because we didn't stay any longer than we had to. I left right as soon as I could. They didn't teach reading; you could memorize stuff and others told you the answers.
- I think it was because nobody really cared if I went or not.
- Yes. It's hard to learn what you don't understand. It's hard to learn when you're made to feel dumb.
- School was irrelevant and did not meet my needs. It was not my style.
- The nuns weren't good teachers or human beings. They just talked about religion and saving my soul.
- I didn't get pushed hard enough; they thought I was slow or stupid.

But many people blamed themselves:

- I got into a lot of fights, so I didn't get much classroom time.

- I was embarrassed to be there because I didn't have anything done or couldn't read much.

- I was too nervous and I was slower than the other kids. They didn't have patience, the teachers. I couldn't learn in that school. But at the Native Education Centre I was free to learn and there was caring and patience.

- I believed I was stupid.

- If I was interested I might have learned something.

Others expressed the deep and enduring anger that resulted from their school experiences:

- For the longest time I looked up to the white man and then I understood that that's all bullshit; we're the same, and some of them are really dumb.

- They thought they were smarter than me, but they weren't.

3.4 Positive Learning Environment

One of our primary objectives of this survey was to explore how Native adults preferred to learn and in what circumstances. A good deal of research into Native learning styles has been conducted, but little of it has been with adults. Furthermore, much of the research has revolved around observation and interpretation by outside academics, the use of learning style inventories, or instructors' anecdotal reporting. The present research in contrast focused on the adults' self-reported preferences.

We began by asking subjects, "If you decided to improve your literacy skills, what learning situation would you prefer?" The results suggested some strong preferences for all-Native situations, and tutorial and small group structures (see Table 4).

Table 4 Number of Respondents Reporting Learning Situation Preferences
(N=56)

Preference	Number
Small Group	25
Tutorial	23
All Native	22
Classroom	5
Self	1

Comments more fully explained these preferences:

- I would prefer tutoring. Don't like being singled out.
- Tutoring (especially if its a female tutor). The tutor has to be patient.
- For sure I would enjoy a classroom setting. I'm used to it.
- All Native students with Native instructor.
- Something like what the Native Education Centre was. All Native people of different nations, learning — not competing but helping each other, and also learning about the different cultures and lifeskills.
- Small group only because it's embarrassing, you know.
- Small group helping each other.
- One-on-one tutoring or small groups working on a project together.
- Small group with all Native students. It's good to discuss things with a group.
- Small group, all Indian, Indian teacher. Somebody that knows our language too.

The question "Where would you like to learn?" produced a strong preference for on-reserve or in-home situations (29). Others identified specific Native training centres, such as the Native Education Centre, Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, and Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. A few mentioned community colleges.

One of the most striking results of this research emerged from the responses to the next two questions. The first, "What are the things you do well? How did you learn them?", revealed an astonishing range of skills mastered by these adults, many of whom were denigrated — and many of whom denigrated themselves — because of their relative lack of literacy skills. Here is just a sample of the skills reported:

- Mechanics, carpentry, hunting, trapping, fishing, logging, maintenance.
- Beading, hide-tanning, trapping, dressing wild game, sewing, cooking, preserving.
- Various. Labour experience. Carpentry, falling, millwork, musician.
- Riding horses, hunting, trapping, mechanical repairs.
- Slashing with chainsaw, repairing saws, carpentry, labour, hunting and camping.
- Bake, cooking, housekeeping, driver.
- I can fix almost anything mechanical, fish, hunt, the usual.
- I can fix cars, fish, hunt, make drums.
- I'm a good cook and housekeeper, I can sew by hand and on the machine.
- Math and sports.
- I'm a good thinker and a good speaker. I know how to make good drums, fishing and hunting all that.
- I can hunt, fish , trap, can food — all that it takes to live.
- I can live off the land, cook and can fish and deer, make nets, traps.
- Hunt, fish, cook, build houses, forestry work, I learned from my uncles and grandfather.
- I can knit, crochet, weave (baskets and blankets); make a lot of things like drums and stuff.

Even more remarkable were the similar patterns of learning reported by the respondents:

- One-to-one teaching from experienced people. Watching and doing with explanations along the way.
- I was taught by people in community. I would watch them do things and then I'd try them.
- Basically taught myself. Just watched people fix motors then tried it myself.
- Learned carving by watching then doing.
- Watched then tried, corrected.

The near-universal reported preference for learning by observing then doing, a preference reported in much of the learning style research (More, 1987; Kaulback, 1984; Swisher & Deyhle, 1989) was even more clearly highlighted by responses to the next question: "How do you learn best?" (see Table 5) Though the exact responses varied, an astonishing 53 of the respondents — 95% — indicated a preference for some version of a "watch and do" learning preference.

Table 5 *QUESTION: HOW DO YOU LEARN BEST?*

Self-reported preference	Number reporting (of 56)
Watch then do	53
Listen	9
Practice	6
On my own	3
Discuss	2
Memorize	1

(total is more than sample because some respondents listed more than one preference)

The accompanying comments may seem repetitive, but they are included to dramatize the importance of the experiential "watch then do" preference and illustrate it through the subjects' own words:

- Watching then trying.

- You only need to see something once to learn it, you don't need to ask lots of questions.

- By watching and doing. I picked things up at the mill really fast.

- There were no lessons. Just watching and doing.

- By watching and trying out. Self-taught on all my skills. Never took courses or had teachers, but I learned things from all over the place.

- The only way I ever knew, by watching and trying things out.

- Self-taught learner of most of my skills. Learn by watching, listening, and trying. I'm quiet type and prefer not to be a talker. I'm a good listener.

- Through grandmother. By watching and doing.

- Hands-on. Direct experience is the best.

- I like it when I can watch first and then when I do it, have someone there.

- Watch and then have to try it on my own - it's the only way to learn.

One respondent, clearly a person accustomed to providing leadership and instruction in the community, volunteered a description of how, as a teacher, he accommodated this learning preference.

- If I saw them having trouble, I'd explain it the simplest way how. I'd show it to them first. I'd stay there, but let them try it. Then show it to them again until they got the knack of it, and then I'd let them go.

This description bears a remarkable similarity to the "helping mode" employed by Native school teachers as described by Collier (1979) in his video study: "Helping, waiting, watching, helping again, waiting some more," in contrast to the sharper, quicker, "in and out" modes used by non-Native instructors observed.

Do Native adults report this near-universal preference because of a culturally-based learning style or because the tasks they've learned lend themselves to this instructional/learning pattern? The cause-effect relationship is not clear, but the sheer frequency of the reported "watch then do" preference suggests the need for adult educators to address, explore and validate this issue for themselves.

Different tasks call for different instructional/learning approaches — for all of us — but this research would suggest that a major challenge for educators of Native adults is to better understand how Native adults have learned successfully and then apply these principles to academic instruction. As we learn better how to apply the principles of experiential learning, we will begin to bridge the discontinuity between the culture of the school and the home and community.

3.5 Current Barriers to Participation

The final factor addressed in the research was current barriers to participation. Why weren't these potential learners enrolled in a program to improve their reading and writing? What was getting in the way now?

The question "Why aren't you presently participating in a reading and writing improvement program?" was first asked without probes or choices. Initial responses indicated a range of obstacles that got in the way:

- I'm self-conscious. I often think , what's the use? When my kids are old enough for school, I want to be able to help them with homework and read stories to them. I think I'll be more serious about upgrading then.
- There is not an appropriate program.
- The only way I could learn to read and write is through home schooling, with someone I'm comfortable with.
- Getting so old, it would be a waste of time. My dad was one of the first grads in Alberta. He chose the bush life after finishing school.
- Hard to find sitter. Kids get sick. I need to stay home. I don't have a phone for people to contact me.
- It's not worth it. I just want to read better; I'm not interested in school or grades.

To further focus respondents and provide them with some specific obstacles they may not have thought of, we identified four major categories of barriers — situational, institutional, informational, and psychosocial — proposed by Darkenwald (1982). The 26 specific barriers were based on Darkenwald's (1982) and Beder's (1990) categories, the researchers' experience, and the results of our trial test, which suggested several additional barriers that were added to subsequent interview schedules.

The interviewer asked respondents to simply indicate whether each potential barrier was a factor in explaining why subjects were not involved in an adult reading and writing program as the interviewer read the list. The results are reported in Table 6.

Non-participation is not simply the flip-side of participation (Beder 1990)— many adults, especially older adults, have learned to compensate for their low level of literacy quite adequately (Fingeret, 1983) and simply may see little or no need for further reading and writing instruction. The "obstacle" is simply their perception that increased literacy skills are irrelevant or unnecessary.

In this survey, however, only 16% of respondents identified "not interested" as a reason for non-participation, and a mere 7% listed "don't believe improving reading and writing will help me," one of the lowest factors rated. These figures contrast sharply with other studies that suggest low perception of need is a major factor in non-attendance (Beder, 1990; Hayes, 1988). For the most part, the Native adults questioned see benefit and value in increasing their literacy skills; the obstacles to participation seem to lie elsewhere.

The results show that not having an appropriate program in the potential learners' community is a major obstacle. With 70% of the respondents citing this factor, clearly a strong message is being sent to programmers and instructors. If educators are serious about reaching Native adults, we must be willing to develop appropriate programs in Native communities. The interest is clearly there. The belief that better reading and writing skills will be beneficial is clearly there. What isn't in place is appropriate programming.

Table 6: Current Barriers to Participation

N=56

ITEM	FREQUENCY
No appropriate program in the community (INST)	39
Don't know about programs or how to find out (INF)	23
No financial support or resources (SIT)	17
Instructional approach is inappropriate (INST)	17
Too self-conscious (P-S)	17
Programs haven't been explained adequately (INF)	16
Don't enjoy school or taking courses (P-S)	16
Way programs are taught isn't right for me (P-S)	15
Lack of transportation (SIT)	14
Interferes with job (SIT)	14
Existing programs have inconvenient schedules (INST)	14
Afraid I won't succeed (P-S)	14
Content is inappropriate (INST)	13
Lack of childcare (SIT)	12
Don't know how to register (INF)	12
Afraid of discrimination (P-S)	12
Friends aren't doing it (P-S)	11
Returning to school is scary (P-S)	11
Lack of time (SIT)	10
Not Interested (P-S)	9
Too old to learn (P-S)	8
No support from family (P-S)	8
Don't believe improving reading & writing will help me (P-S)	4
Don't believe I can learn (P-S)	3
Spousal opposition (P-S)	3
Fees too high (INST)	0

Related to this is the informational void perceived by potential Native literacy learners. Forty-one percent indicated that they did not know about programs or how to find out about them. It is evident that institutions must make greater efforts to reach Native adults with information about programs. Johnstone & Rivera (cited in Darkenwald, 1982) found that 85% of adults with high socio-economic status in larger communities knew of at least one place where adults could receive instruction, while that figure dropped to 19% for people of lower socio-economic status in rural areas. The very people who need the programs the most either have no access to them or inadequate information about what does exist.

Financial impediments are a distinct barrier (30%), and the need for continued and expanded financial support for Native adults through greater funding for training allowances, to bands and tribal councils, as well as CEIC and other agencies, is clearly indicated.

Of equal importance is the 30% who indicated that instructional approaches in existing programs are inappropriate. Here is an issue, illustrated and explained through earlier responses, that can and must be addressed by institutions committed to delivering effective adult programs to Native people. The shape and nature of a more appropriate instructional approach has been suggested by the potential learners themselves, and this theme will be developed and enlarged upon in subsequent sections of this report.

It must also be pointed out that, as with motivations for learning, "reasons for non-participation vary according to such things as age and life cycle status" (Beder, 1990). Depending on the population sampled, the obstacles reported may differ substantially from those reported here. Nonetheless, this study does focus on a narrow section of the population —Native adults with low literacy skills not participating in programs— and as such contains some general data that may help educators better understand why this group does not participate in literacy programs and what obstacles literacy programmers and instructors may have to address to achieve broader involvement.

When we look at creating more appropriate programs, we must recognize the need for fundamental and integrated change. Ray Barnhardt (1981) tells us that all educational programs are made up of four elements: goals, methods, content, and structure. To create a truly appropriate and effective program, all factors must be examined in terms of the learners themselves. Then a process of adaptation and accommodation must be undertaken that results in programs that truly fit the learner and his or her community and personal context. Hopefully this data, and the comments of the respondents themselves, will provide programmers and educators with direction and guidelines for engaging in this vital process.

3.6. Community Differences

In examining the data by communities, significant differences emerge. These differences are particularly apparent in the prioritization of literacy purposes. In this question, participants were asked to identify the eight possible goals in terms of their importance to the respondent on a scale of one to five. When this information is analyzed according to community, it becomes clear that the priorities of one community are not necessarily those of others. (Table 7)

While it is acknowledged that the small size of the sample from each community makes generalizations risky, it is apparent from the above data combined with the previously reported anecdotal information that different communities have markedly different histories, experiences, problems, characters, aspirations and economic and social conditions. Hence a literacy program for one community might not necessarily be appropriate for another.

An examination of the unique aspects of a particular community is necessary if an appropriate program is to be developed with and for that community. Conversely, it seems unlikely that a program whose goals, methods, structure and content are determined outside of consultation with and without a genuine attempt to adapt to the community is likely to fail. If adult education in general and literacy instruction in particular are to contribute to overall community development, they must be community-based.

4. Summary

This survey addressed four issues: potential literacy learners' perceptions of the purposes and perceived value of literacy acquisition,

Table 7: Importance of Goal as Identified by Community

Goal	High Average	Community	Low Average	Community
Knowledge	5.0	Halfway	3.83	S. Shuswap
Personal	5.0	Nicola	4.0	S. Shuswap
Family	4.88	Kitkatla and Nicola	3.38	Vancouver and Moberly Lake
Community	4.6	Kitkatla and Halfway	3.5	Vancouver, Nicola and Fraser Valley
Instrumental	4.88	Fraser Valley	3.3	S. Shuswap
Economic	5.0	Halfway	2.3	S. Shuswap
Entertainment	4.13	Halfway	3.17	S. Shuswap
Culture	4.75	Halfway	3.25	Moberly Lake

past barriers to learning to read and write, preferred learning environment, and current barriers to participation.

In regard to the first issue, both the statistical and qualitative data suggest that potential Native literacy learners are generally not motivated by any one factor. Their purposes for acquiring increased literacy skills are enormously varied and complex. While personal knowledge and instrumental objectives were all identified as being very important by more than 70% of respondents, virtually all factors were seen as important by large numbers of the subjects.

The anecdotal responses more fully illustrated the range of literacy needs of would-be learners. From dealing with legal papers and filling out forms to writing down cultural traditions and getting more involved in Indian politics, what Native learners want from literacy instruction is as varied as the individuals themselves.

Past barriers to learning to read and write were similarly diverse. What emerged was a complex of factors related to dysfunctional homes, poverty, personal problems, inappropriateness of schools, overt prejudice and racism, oppression, residential schools, and the cultural clash between the home and school. Generally, past school experiences were recalled with bitterness and pain, and an examination of respondents' comments revealed the many ways the school system has failed Native learners.

Preferred learning environments fell into two main categories: structure and methods. Structurally there was a marked preference for on-reserve and all-Native situations. Methodologically, small group and tutorial strategies were favoured, but most striking of all was the overwhelming preference — 95% — for some variation of a "watch then do" approach. While this in part reflects the types of skills and tasks respondents had learned successfully, it also suggests how Native adults have learned in the past and challenges literacy educators to find ways to accommodate this preference in academic instruction.

The final issue, current barriers to participation, showed that institutional factors (specifically the lack of appropriate programs in respondents' communities and inappropriate instructional approaches) were two of the top four barriers. Lack of information about programs and insufficient financial support were the other primary factors noted. These results suggest concrete and immediate steps institutions concerned with providing Native literacy instruction can and must take to increase participation.

An examination of the data by community indicated that generalizations about what constitutes an appropriate program is difficult. The range of literacy goals and priorities between communities suggest that not only must individual aspirations and goals be accommodated, but community character, issues and differences must be considered as well.

IV. Meeting The Needs of Native Learners and Communities

The findings reported in Chapter III of this report corroborate much of the existing research, which indicates that adults are motivated to improve reading and writing skills by the interplay of a variety of factors. Our findings also show that motivations vary from individual to individual and community to community, and the respondents' answers concerning this issue showed enormous diversity of perceived purposes and values of literacy. However, this sample of Native adults was consistent in giving great importance to motivations involving personal growth and self-confidence and the fulfillment of everyday tasks.

Great diversity was also reported in the areas of past barriers to learning to read and write and current barriers to participation in literacy programs. The learning environments preferred by respondents suggested programs that are quite different from conventional literacy situations.

What kind of literacy programs, then, would be most appropriate for Native adults? To answer that question we drew on the survey findings reported, other pertinent research and a review of current illustrative Native literacy programs and practices in Canada. To establish this latter information we identified and investigated a number of successful Native literacy programs across the country. In some cases programs were visited; in others, instructors and programmers were interviewed in person; while in other situations interviews were conducted by phone. In all cases we tried to identify what factors made the program successful, what unique practices or structure were employed, and what aspects were generalizable to other programs.

The resulting data was informative. Combined with the research, this review provides programmers and practitioners with an overview of practices that we believe could lead to the operation of more successful literacy programs for Native adults.

1. Where To Begin

Our research tells us that programmers and instructors must start with the learners; before setting up a literacy program, to be maximally effective it is necessary to find out what the potential learners need and want, what the characteristics of the community are, and how individual and community factors interplay with the literacy issue. This fundamental step may present some difficulties, but it is at the base of successful programming.

The Adult Basic Education program in Portage, B.C., uses a written interview process with its learners, addressing issues such as past school experience, motivations for enrolment in the present program, long-term goals, etc. The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in Merritt, B.C., is also putting in place a system by which learners are encouraged to set their own goals and determine the most appropriate ways of reaching them. Virtually all programmers and instructors we talked to conduct an informal interview with learners entering a program in order to determine "where they are at" and what their expectations of the program are.

However, there is also a need to begin the assessment process at an earlier stage: by formally or informally surveying the community in order to obtain information that will allow programmers and practitioners to set up responsive programs. The Norway House Adult Education Program, one of five programs of the Frontier School Division for northern Manitoba, approached community leaders in the band council and officers in such areas as social services, child and family services, and church organizations to obtain information on their perception of community literacy needs. These leaders and officers, who had direct contact with potential learners, had noticed, for example, that many people in the community could use a driver's licence but that they were afraid of not passing the exam due to their lack of reading skills. The program responded by offering a drivers' education course which was attended by more than two hundred people.

The Native Literacy Coordinator for New Brunswick spent several months promoting the notion of Native literacy at the level of band councils and associations and assessing their perceptions of appropriate programming in order to engage their support in the operation of literacy programs at the community level. As a follow-up to this advocacy work, Native Literacy councils made up of concerned individuals were formed in several communities. These councils were in charge of recruiting students and organizing literacy programs appropriate to local situations.

For an effective literacy program, the practice of going directly to the potential learners in order to find out from them what their views are has been strongly indicated by our findings. The interview schedule used in the current survey (see Appendix B) or a variation could serve this purpose.

2. Location, Format and Scheduling

Our research findings show a preference for one-to-one tutoring and small group situations in non-traditional learning environments, with a few adults expressing a preference to learn in more structured classroom situations. When deciding on location, format and scheduling, our research indicates the importance of accommodating the learners' needs and desires by offering the flexibility that will allow all learners to participate in one way or another.

The Council Fire Native Cultural Centre in Toronto, Ontario, offers a flexible literacy program where adults can choose among several formats: regularly scheduled one-to-one tutoring or small group instruction and occasional drop-in sessions at the centre itself, or one-to-one regularly scheduled tutoring in the learner's home.

The James Bay Education Centre in Moosonee, northern Ontario, is planning to offer literacy instruction at the learners' work place, while the Nii Sakaan Literacy Program in Sault Saint Marie, Ontario, has set up a literacy class in a half-way house for Native women with problems of alcoholism and drug addiction. As well, the Walpole Island Adult Literacy & Education Program in Wallaceburg, southern Ontario, is hoping to have a community radio literacy program in place by the Spring of 1991. These are examples of how programmers are attempting to accommodate learners' needs by reaching out to them.

3. Providing Learner Support Services, Responding To Community Needs, And Using Community Resources

At least a quarter of the potential learners interviewed in our study mentioned situational factors, such as lack of transportation and childcare facilities, as barriers for their current participation in programs. Programmers attempting to reach most potential learners should consider providing them with support systems in such areas.

Since many learners were having difficulty travelling to and from classes, the Toti:lthet Centre in Mission B.C., now offers bus service between the centre and different locations in town. Similarly, the Chippewas of Sarnia Education Committee in southern Ontario uses a band van to drive students to and from class. As well, they provide a liaison worker from the reserve who recruits students and offers them emotional support to stay in the program, and an early childhood education worker looks after the children while their parents attend classes. The liaison worker, who is a recovering alcoholic, has also organized a youth group to provide support for the older children.

Several programs in Ontario have incorporated the concept of "intergenerational" or "family literacy" to their curriculum. School-age children do not need to stay at home or at an after-school care centre because they have become active participants in the program itself. The Northshore Native Workskills Committee in Spanish River, central Ontario, offers an after-school program for children and parents where, with the assistance of instructors and tutors, families work together on homework and reading and writing activities. An immediate result of this program has been the improvement of the academic level of the children at school. Parents have also been able to help their children with their homework, an aspiration expressed by many of the adults in our research, while improving their own reading and writing.

Many of the adults interviewed in our survey drew a relationship between their lack of reading and writing skills and psychosocial problems that they encountered while growing up. Alcoholism, drug addiction, poverty, racism and being raised in dysfunctional families or foster homes were some of the factors that these people perceived as having interfered with their learning. Some respondents mentioned similar factors as barriers to their current participation in literacy programs.

All the instructors that we talked to acknowledged the existence of these kinds of problems among their students and mentioned the importance of establishing a supportive environment for the learners. While creating such an environment within the learning situation itself is of fundamental importance, they all agreed on the need to extend this support beyond the boundaries of the classroom or learning situation.

The Native Education Centre in Vancouver, B.C., offers personal and career counselling services for students. Instructors can refer those cases that go beyond their scope of expertise to other workers who are in a better position to assist the students. As well, the students themselves have organized a local chapter of Alcoholic Anonymous, which meets regularly in the school.

The Arctic College Adult Education program in Arviat (formerly Eskimo Point) in the Northwest Territories, runs a woman's literacy group which spends one and a half hours, twice a week, discussing their common problems and concerns and then using these problems as a starting point for reading and writing activities. Among others, the following themes have been discussed and worked on: psychological, physical and sexual abuse; drug and alcohol problems; traditional midwifery; and the role of women in the community.

The literacy program at the Council Fire Native Cultural Centre in Toronto has access to support staff, which includes a family worker and a counsellor. The centre also offers "pay-what-you-can" hot lunches every day and dinners twice a week. Literacy learners take part in the many activities organized by the centre: Native dancing classes, women's circles, elders' circles, moms and tots programs and the video club. Every Thursday, the Nanishnabe Native Health Clinic holds appointments with people in need of medical care at the centre itself. The registered medical doctor and nurse of this "travelling clinic" practice a combination of both Western and Native medicine.

The town of Moosonee, Ontario, is going through the legal process of obtaining reserve status. This involves the reading and writing of much material, particularly by the band chief. The Literacy Program coordinator and her adult students are assisting the chief in the process by revising written material, writing reports in lay language for the community, studying the process and passing the information on. This kind of work has made the community aware of their need for a better understanding and knowledge of the legal system. Therefore, the literacy coordinator is looking into setting up legal education classes.

Many communities have engaged the participation of elders in their programs. This involvement has taken many forms: the Chippewas of Cawash Band in Cape Croker, western Ontario, organizes a monthly coffee house where elders tell stories in Ojibway and give accounts of the history of the region. These sessions are taped and then used in intergenerational literacy groups and with children at the daycare centre and school.

Other programs have set out to obtain some specific information from elders in the community in an effort to preserve history that otherwise could be lost forever. The students in the Sanikiliaq and Coral Harbour literacy programs in the Eastern Arctic interviewed elders on traditional practices and produced bilingual books which report their findings. The coordinator of the James Bay Education Centre in northern Ontario went to all the reserves in the area to interview women elders on traditional midwifery and child-rearing practices. The information that she taped is now being systematized and recorded in writing by learners at the literacy centre.

Elders are also acting as important resources in mother tongue literacy projects. As one instructor we talked to put it, "Elders, history and our mother tongues are part of our healing process as Native people." Many Native literacy programs have incorporated mother tongue literacy in one way or another: mother tongue socials in which people of all ages interact using only the Native language, story-telling by elders and then going through the process of writing them down, structured classes using a variety of methods, etc.

There is still much work to be done in the area of aboriginal literacy. Such issues as whether a Native language is taught as a first or second language (depending on its degree of oral use); the problems of writing languages that historically have been only oral, and determining appropriate methods of instruction are all important problems that must be addressed. The Snowdrift Chipewyan Literacy Project in the Northwest Territories exemplifies well the complexity of this issue. For a summary of this project, see Appendix D.

Most literacy programs engage the assistance of community organizations or institutions and individual volunteers. The Norway House Adult Basic Education Program in northern Manitoba has access to the high school's power mechanics and carpentry shops, where students working towards certification in one of these areas can obtain practical experience. The Council Fire Native Cultural Centre's literacy program in Toronto has established an excellent working relationship with the area's public library, which is committed to maintaining a good collection of appropriate reading material for the program.

Individuals assist some programs as occasional speakers, "mentors" or role-models, experts in particular areas, etc. Perhaps the most important area in which individuals contribute to literacy programs is as volunteer tutors involved in one-to-one instruction. Most of the programmers that we talked to reported considerable assistance from volunteer tutors, although they also report having difficulty in recruiting Native tutors. They saw this as a problem since students would generally prefer to work with another Native person. This was confirmed by our survey findings, which showed that most potential learners would prefer an all Native learning situation. While some programs operate with the assistance of a large percentage of non-Native people, others have partially solved the problem by recruiting Native high school students in their latter years of study, as well as some Native adults from the community. Recruitment campaigns have been done by radio, door-to-door canvassing and leafleting, invitations to information meetings and socials, and through the assistance of community leaders and officials working in government agencies.

Most programs provide their tutors with training workshops before they get matched with a learner. Although there is considerable consistency in the content of these workshops (illiteracy as a social problem, Native learning styles, methods, techniques and materials, etc.), different centres train their tutors in different ways. The Can-Am Friendship Centre in Windsor, Ontario, offers a total of twelve hours of workshops spread over three days, while the Council Fire Native Cultural Centre in Toronto provides between eighteen and twenty-four hours of training spread over a period of six to eight weeks.

4. Funding And Support Services For Programmers, Instructors And Staff

All the instructors and programmers that we talked to agreed on the fundamental importance of adequate and ongoing funding for their programs. Only with assured funding could the necessary staffing, facilities, materials and other support services for learners, instructors and volunteers be provided. They emphasized the importance of having available funding for expansion when required. They also expressed the need to receive funding "with no strings attached", as the general tendency has been to view literacy programs as "a quick fix" to prepare people for employment, thus distorting the ongoing and long-term nature of literacy skills learning and limiting the scope of what programs can do.

Some of the instructors we approached, particularly those working in remote communities, felt a sense of isolation and a desire to network with other programs in order to exchange ideas, materials, etc. They expressed a desire to receive support in the form of periodic workshops that could present them with innovative teaching ideas, or with an opportunity to discuss with other instructors and workshop leaders their instructional practices.

Perhaps the best example in Canada of how Native programmers and instructors have organized in order to network and provide each other with ongoing support is the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition. This is an umbrella organization for twenty-seven individual literacy projects operating in different parts of Ontario. The board of directors consists entirely of the co-ordinators of the individual programs, and there is one paid staff person who is responsible for administrative matters. In addition to this, they work very closely with a Native Literacy Program Coordinator, an official in the Provincial Ministry of Skills Development. This coordinator secures government funding for all the existing programs and the work of the coalition, looks into the installation of new programs, provides expertise in the areas of programming and instruction and generally supports the literacy work of Native communities in the province.

The coalition serves as a networking organization, providing individual programmers and instructors with ongoing support in the areas of instructional materials, communications with other programs (they are all connected through a computer-based service), organization of in-service workshops, etc. The coalition also sponsors conferences where the coordinators, instructors and even students from all the different programs meet to learn from each other and to receive fresh ideas from resource people in the field of literacy and Native culture.

One of the latest accomplishments of the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition has been the organization of a Native Literacy Institute aimed at certifying practising instructors. This flexible, travelling institute will provide an opportunity for these practitioners to validate their experiences, receive some formal training in areas that they have identified as necessary and obtain formal recognition for their work.

The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition demonstrates how concerted efforts of individual communities and programs organized into a provincial organization, with the support of a government agency, can produce remarkable results. Perhaps the most important outcome in Ontario is that the concept of "success" in literacy programs has changed to become a collective realization that literacy acquisition is an ongoing process, interdependent with other community factors, which entails a commitment to permanent, long-term work on the part of both communities and government.

Another key issue in the work of Native people in Ontario has been the development of respect for a variety of literacy practices between and within communities, while still conserving a sense of unity and common purpose. As Priscilla Hewitt, Native Literacy Program Coordinator for the Ontario Ministry of Skills Development puts it, "The Native community is using literacy as a tool in personal/community empowerment/development. We take literacy to mean those skills that enable us to participate more fully in the society in which we live". The Ontario experience certainly provides the rest of the country with a model that, modified to conform to regional characteristics, could serve as a basis for effective Native literacy programming.

5. Community-Based Programming

The diversity of community and individual literacy uses, needs and aspirations, coupled with differences in historical, economic, social and political realities, points to the need for responsive programs that reflect a community-based, student-centred educational philosophy.

Practitioners meeting in Edmonton as part of the *Aboriginal Literacy Action Plan* (1990) deliberations summarized the characteristics of good Native education programming. These characteristics are outlined in Figure 3.

As a result of our research we would like to add the following characteristics:

- Programmers begin by establishing potential learners' literacy needs and perceptions.
- Programs receive adequate, ongoing funding with as few strings attached as possible.
- Program locations and scheduling are flexible enough to cater to students' needs and circumstances.
- Programs incorporate the concept of intergenerational or family literacy.
- Curriculum and instructional approaches promote critical thinking.
- Instructors accommodate variety of student learning styles, including "watch then do".
- The learning and testing of subskills is de-emphasized.
- Programmers network with other programs and provide instructors with ongoing support and professional development opportunities.

This range of characteristics is represented in the "Elements Of A Model Community-Based/Student-Centred Native Literary Program" chart (Figure 6, page 85)

Figure 3. Characteristics of Good Native Education Programming

As practitioners, we have come to learn what is effective with Native adults and what is not. These characteristics address most of the barriers faced by the adult learner. Research and experience both point to the following characteristics:

1. Programs that are community-based and community controlled.
2. Programs that are linked to the overall economic, social, political and spiritual development of the community.
3. Instruction stresses group interaction and cooperative learning.
4. In the case of literacy, instruction reflects a whole-language approach and emphasizes the use of student-generated materials.
5. Student-centred approaches are used that include student input into program design and operation.
6. Life skills are incorporated into the program.
7. Teaching strategies are used that are consistent with the learner's cultural patterns and learning styles.
8. Program content is culturally appropriate, builds on students' cultural background, and promotes the development of self-esteem and a positive Native identity.
9. Sufficient counselling services are provided.
10. Programs accept and affirm the learners' language.
11. Program goals, methods, structure, and content reflect the experiences,needs and backgrounds of the learner.
12. Instructors are culturally sensitive, while being involved with and committed to the community they serve.
13. Programs incorporate a strong cross-cultural component.
14. Programming is flexible enough to draw on the strengths of each learner and accommodate individual needs.
15. Students are prepared to function in both the Native and non-Native community.

(Aboriginal Literacy Action Plan, 1990, pps. 88-91)

6. Student-Centred Teaching Approaches And Instructional Practices

In addition to the issues involved in organizing and implementing a literacy program, the overall effectiveness of a program will depend on the approaches to literacy instruction and the instructional practices that occur in a learning situation. In this section we examine three approaches to literacy that embody the characteristics of a student-centred literacy program. These three approaches are whole language, language experience and dialogical education. Guidelines for accommodating a "watch then do" learning preference in a literacy context are also presented.

Traditional methods of literacy instruction have ignored the variability in language use in different social contexts by different communities. The widespread use of "basals" and their counterparts in adult literacy instruction shows that it has been assumed that there is one standard language to be learned by all learners. There has been little recognition of the different dialects that students may bring with them, nor of the variety of their interests in and needs for reading and writing.

Traditional methods have also used the "bottom up" approach: the initiation of instruction with fragments of discourse delaying contact with meaningful texts until later stages. Most commonly, phonics is used as the core of this curriculum in combination with word recognition techniques. Language learning is seen as a linear process where a series of skills, as determined by the instructor or the textbook, is taught until the student is "prepared" to confront the reading and writing of full texts.

6.1 Whole Language

Whole language is an educational stance that promotes the learning of reading and writing as an integrated practice and in intricate relation to oral language. Its proponents claim that language is more easily learned when it is authentic and natural, kept "whole", and not divided into meaningless fragments. It must also have social utility. Language is learned best when it is interesting and accessible to the learner who has the power to choose and initiate its use.

Altwerger et. al. (1987) state that whole language is not merely a set of practices, but rather "a set of beliefs, a perspective." The basic premise behind a whole language program is that language acquisition, both oral and written, is a natural process — language is learned "incidentally". It happens as part of the functioning of a community and the use of language that its members engage in.

In the whole language learning situation, language development and content become the two integral components of the curriculum. This includes the design of meaningful projects (content) that allow for students to engage in authentic speech and literacy tasks (language development). Therefore, whole language instructors tend to organize the curriculum around topics or themes. This strategy allows for both unity of purpose and flexibility in language development among the members of the group.

All the programmers and instructors that we talked to mentioned their learners' desire to incorporate Native content into the literacy curriculum. A whole language approach easily allows for this to happen and provides a model which also permits the use of cultural content as the basis for the development of literacy tasks. Many programs have engaged in this kind of project. The Native Women's Resource Centre in Toronto, for instance, produced a booklet entitled "Neem-dah, Let's Dance", in which they narrate the history of Native dance and explain the significance of the different steps and parts of a Native's dancer regalia. The same group is now engaged in producing a booklet on different aspects of the feast. At the Native Education Centre in Vancouver, literacy students studied Native history and social perspectives and utilized current materials on Native issues (e.g. newspaper articles) in group projects.

In addition to other examples presented elsewhere in this report, these are clear illustrations of a whole language thematic approach: they allow for unity of purpose, develop the learners' knowledge about content of particular relevance and interest to Native students, and also entail the development of a variety of language activities, from oral expression to reading and writing. In addition, they allow for "natural" use of language and "incidental" learning of oral communication, reading and writing skills.

Whole language is supported by extensive research on language development, particularly in the field of psycholinguistics, and arose as the practical result of this research. This work directly challenged the premise underlying the "bottom-up" approach, questioning its validity and effectiveness, fostering the practice of an alternative approach.

In April 1967, Kenneth Goodman presented a paper which has become a landmark in the field of language instruction. "Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game" challenged the universally believed notion of reading as a precise process that "involves exact, detailed, sequential perception and identification of letters, words, spelling patterns and large language units" (1982, p. 33).

Goodman pointed out that programs based on these assumptions had little theoretical or research-based support. Existing documentation shows that prior to the 1900's reading was exclusively taught through the alphabet and phonics (which appeared in the middle of the 16th century). The "word" method began to be used in the early 19th century and the "sentence" method, towards the end of the 1800's (Fries, 1963). Although all of these methods would have appeared innovative and in opposition to the former, they are all based on the same theoretical conceptions of reading as a detailed sequential acquisition of isolated language units. Variations of these approaches have continued to be used throughout this century. In contrast, Goodman offered the following definition: "...reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game. It involves an interaction between thought and language" (Goodman, 1982, pp. 33-34).

Goodman's conclusions had grown out of five years of research with children in their beginning and intermediate stages of reading. The children would read aloud at a level slightly higher than what they were used to, and Goodman would keep notes of their "mistakes". He would then make an analysis of these mistakes, which he calls "miscues", to show how the reader had used her/his own background knowledge and expectations to replace and/or omit certain words and phrases in order to arrive at a text that would make sense. Thus, he concludes that, "At any point in time, of course, the reader has available to him and brings to his reading the sum total of his experience and his language and thought development" (1982, p. 37).

This prior knowledge and experience, Goodman claims, would include graphic, syntactic and semantic information that would allow the reader to predict and anticipate, using print "just enough to confirm his guess of what's coming, to cue more semantic and syntactic information " (1982, p. 39). Consequently, efficient reading would result not from the precise perception and identification of sequenced elements in a text, but from "skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time" (1982, p. 34).

Although whole language theoreticians see oral and written language as two distinct "sets of language registers", they also claim that, in many ways, they overlap. This becomes particularly important when dealing with learners' previous syntactic and semantic information. A new reader will be using knowledge of oral language to extract meaning from a written text. This becomes particularly relevant when dealing with Native literacy learners, who are often speakers of non-standard dialects of English. Most reading material is written in standard English, which has specific syntactical forms and vocabulary. If learners have only been passive listeners of the standard forms, it cannot be expected that they will be efficient readers of standard English. As Archibald et al. (1990) state, "He cannot predict chunks of meaning, self-correct, mentally interact, or enjoy language with which he is not familiar. He is in danger of barking at print!" (p.10).

They propose a number of activities to promote language expansion (see Figure 4). They add:

> These language expansion experiences are best provided in a small group setting and involve frequent interpersonal interaction with fellow students as well as the teacher. They lend themselves well to the new processes that are so vital to whole language and co-operative learning (Archibald et al., 1990, p. 10).

For whole language proponents, reading and writing are connected. First, the basis is the same: language in its written form. Secondly, the writer continually needs to assume the role of reader in order to evaluate the writing and then to go back to the writer's role to clarify or correct perceptions made as a reader. In a 1985 study, Collins concluded that "...students who are able to organize their thinking on paper are in a better position to understand another writer's organization of ideas" (1985, p. 52).

Figure 4 Activities To Promote Language Expansion

- Read Aloud Literature
- Teacher Modelling with Student Practice and Student Rereads
- Community Field Trips
- Tape and Radio Listening or Read Alongs
- Drama and Performing Arts
- Student to Student Interaction
- Cooperative Learning

(Archibald et. al., 1990. p.10)

Additional examples of language expansion activities include:

- Guest Speakers
- Brainstorming and Clustering
- Interviews
- Peer Response to Reading and Writing
- Simulation Games and Structured Experience
- Role Playing
- Panel Discussions and Debates
- Readings by Authors
- Open and Guided Discussions
- Response Journals
- Partner Writing
- Chair Talk
- Directed Reading/Thinking Activity (DRTA)
- Book Talk
- Dialogue Journals
- Questionnaires
- Word Association

Rather than approaching the learning of reading and writing as discrete units, whole language instructors provide the learner with situations that allow for the "natural" use of both, in addition to the use of oral language. This happens in either "speech events" or "literacy events" (Goodman, 1986). Goodman describes these events as including the use of language, the people using it — with their purposes and social relationships — and the general context. What separates a speech event from a literacy event is that in the former both speaker and listener are present, while in the latter only the writer or the reader is present. Given that the context of the printed word is not immediate, written texts must also include cues to provide the context. The reader, by drawing on previous experience and knowledge, "fills the gaps" and extracts meaning from the written text. It is important therefore to provide literacy students with reading material that reflects their realities, while also organizing tasks that will allow for the expansion of their background knowledge or "schema".

One of the main aspects of writing, and what makes it different from the use of oral language, is that writers must "contextualize" thought in order to communicate it to a reader. That is why Francis Kazemek (1983, 1985) suggests that literacy instruction should not avoid but rather stress personal or expressive writing, particularly during the beginning stages. He argues that this would allow the learner to explore writing in a non-threatening manner.

Whole language proponents encourage the use of personal writing, but not to the exclusion of other kinds of writing. Since the curriculum is organized around a theme, whatever kind of writing appears to be pertinent and meaningful is undertaken: interviews, reports, journals, letters, lists, etc. Similarly, reading takes place as necessary, in order to find out information, confirm or reject preconceived notions, for enjoyment, and so on.

One example of a whole language approach is a technique used by the Nokee Kwe program in London, Ontario. They use theatre as a medium of expression. They produced a play, done entirely by students and based on their own experiences, which toured Southern Ontario and received excellent reviews. This technique combined student backgrounds with oral and written expression that led to integrated, natural literacy development.

Figure 5 Free and Structured Journal Writing

	Personal	Shared With Instructor Only	Shared With Class
Free	- writing down in any way your most intimate thoughts and feelings about any area of your life and how these affect what you are doing and thinking and feeling right now. Why? - learn more about yourself and why you do and feel the things you do.	- writing of thoughts and feelings about any area of your life and how this relates to school. Why? - to get your feelings down on paper to better understand yourself and to allow the instructor to get to know you better as a person and as a student.	- personal writing about school subjects and/or personal experiences. Often involves experiences shared by all the students. Why? - to share common feelings and experiences with others to get to know each other better, form support networks and solve problems as a group.
Structured	- to look into your own thoughts, feelings and experience with the help of guideposts or questions. Why? - to reach areas within yourself that you might not travel to on your own.	- to organize your thoughts and feelings into specific areas, for example, feelings about Math and English. Why? - to better understand your school experience and be able to asses your strengths and weaknesses.	- writing personal feelings about specific topics along with the rest of the class. For example: After having a class on journal writing; what did you get out of it? what were your feelings? how could it have been more valuable for you? should we do it again? Why? - evaluation of class experience and expression of group as well as individual feelings.

An instructor at the Toti:lthet Centre in Mission, B.C., effectively used a system of free and structured journal writing with her literacy class that combined both personal and narrative functions (Figure 5).

6.2 Language Experience

Language experience is a term widely used to refer to teaching practices which use the oral language and experiences of the learner as the basis for reading and writing instruction. Oral accounts of experiences are recorded in order to create written texts that serve as reading materials. Common instructional practices are:

1. The student gives an oral account of personal experiences or the teacher creates a common situation for the whole class in order to elicit oral language (listening to a song, doing art work, going on a field trip, attending a theatrical presentation, etc.).

2. The oral discourse that narrates or presents a reaction to the experience is dictated to the teacher, who writes it.

3. This student-authored account is used for reading.

4. In addition to reading, the text is used for the teaching of subskills, such as phonics, structural analysis, sight words, grammatical structures, spelling and vocabulary building.

5. The piece is also used for writing, which may begin by copying the text or parts of it, until the learner has acquired enough skills to write independently.

6. The piece may become the starting point of another activity, which may constitute a new experience, the basis for the creation on new texts.

Language experience and whole language share many common assumptions. They both favour a learner-centred curriculum, treat reading as a personal act, propose the use of oral and written language in the literacy classroom, view the reading and writing processes as being inextricably interconnected, and are mainly concerned with language for communication and meaning-making.

However, there are some important differences between them. While whole language is an articulated educational stance that includes a theory and research-based view of language and education, language experience is a method for the teaching of reading and writing. Often, particularly in its earlier application (language experience as a technique was used in the late 19th century and was popularized by Ashton-Warner, and Lee and Van Allen and others in the 1950's and 60's), language experience proponents often advocated the teaching of phonics, structural analysis, syntax and vocabulary through the use of learner-authored texts. Thus, the use of complete units of discourse and meaning-making techniques is combined with the teaching of subskills, which necessitates the breaking down of meaningful language into isolated units. Conversely, whole language, based on the language theory that supports it, favours keeping language "whole" at all times.

Language experience and its instructional practices, have been widely used in literacy instruction with adults. Kennedy and Roeder find this method of particular relevance to the teaching of adults, because:

> The adult learner approaches reading with a history of negative school experience, feeling of failure, and emotional blocks to learning. Language experience provides a process which allows students to deal with these problems head on... the method builds on the students' feelings of confidence and self-respect by treating the student as a person with ideas worth of being communicated and presented in writing. (1975, p. 5)

Stauffer (1980) and Sawyer et al. (1987) foster the use of the language experience technique with adults based on similar premises. Kennedy and Roeder give particular emphasis to the therapeutic effects of the use of the method on adult learners:

> Many students have told us that after talking or writing about their feelings of failure and frustration about reading, these feelings were considerably lessened. This is the single most important experience that Language Experience provides for the adult learner. (1975, p. 6)

The literature concerning the interrelationship between the reading and writing processes, reviewed in the whole language section of this chapter, is also applicable to language experience. However, given that language experience uses the transcription of the oral language of the learner to create a written text, there are other pertinent research findings. A study by Ruddell concludes that: "Reading comprehension is a function of the similarity of patterns of language structure in the reading material to oral patterns of language structure used by learners (1965, p. 408)."

Ausubel (1967) claims that meaningful learning occurs when the learning task is related to the learner's existing structure of knowledge. Learner authorship of reading materials guarantees a similarity of syntactic patterns between oral and written expression while making direct use of the learner's knowledge, thus allowing for full comprehension from the very beginning. As Goodman states:

> Relevancy is vital in reading instruction. Teaching and learning in reading must always be centred in comprehension. The importance of any particular letters and words in sequence can be determined only in relationship to the message the whole sequence is conveying. That means that from the very beginning of instruction learners must be dealing with meaningful, natural language. Perhaps the best place to begin is their own language as they use it to cope with their own experience (1972, p. 502).

The literature that relates feelings of self-esteem to school achievement is clear: "Overall, the research evidence clearly shows a persistent and significant relationship between the self-concept and academic achievement" (Purkey, 1975, p. 15). Language experience, by building on the language and experiences of the learner and by using learner authorship as the basis for reading materials, promotes high degrees of self-esteem. By doing so, it brings in other positive feelings such as self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy.

Language experience is widely used in Native literacy centres. Almost every instructor we talked to reported using some variation of this approach with students. In some cases, like the Adult Education Program in Norway House, Manitoba, students having difficulty with the technical aspect of writing (drawing the letters) are encouraged to use a word processor. In the James Bay Area Education Centre in Moosonee, all the students visit the place where one of their peers work. That student shows them the premises, explains the work and, once back to class, they write about their experience together. Using this process, they have learned about fire stations, language related to the hardware business, the experiences and vocabulary of a cook, etc.

6.3 Dialogical Education

Influential Brazilian adult educator Paulo Freire has helped those involved in literacy to view literacy instruction and literacy students in new and profoundly different ways. He has introduced new concepts and terms into the literacy debate and, more importantly, has challenged us to see literacy as a process that involves more than "psychologically and mechanically dominating reading and writing techniques." He insists that we see the process of literacy as one leading to greater consciousness and capacity to change the world. When Freire tells us that reading "is not a matter of memorizing and repeating given syllables, words and phrases, but rather of reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing itself, and on the profound significance of language," he is moving literacy away from traditional, narrow conceptualizations to a perspective that is holistic, learner-centred, and socially integrated.

To Freire, education is one of two things. Either it is a process that dominates people, treating them as empty vessels to be filled and reinforcing their sense of themselves as "objects," or it is a process that frees illiterates from their "culture of silence," treats them as equals with rich experiences and capacities, and involves them fully as "subjects" in all aspects of their education. Freire calls the former system "banking" education — which he says results in the "domestication" of learners — and the second he calls "dialogical" or "problem posing" education — which results in learners being able to "name" the world, to reflect critically on the "problems of men in and with the world" and to act to solve those problems.

In the banking method, there is no genuine dialogue. Instead, words and ideas are "deposited" in the learner. The students are "fed" a diet of words and exercises that are unrelated to their circumstances.

At the heart of Freire's approach is the belief that meaningful education must involve "authentic dialogue" between students and instructors. Instructors must become co-learners in a mutual process of exploring the world, reflecting on genuine problems, and developing real solutions.

The dialogical or "problem-posing" approach to literacy uses the students' experiences as members of a particular class and ethnocultural group as the basis for literacy instruction. The learners are encouraged to see themselves as active creators, and not merely as passive recipients of culture. Through a process of reflection and dialogue, the learners become aware of their own power and can move on to participate in individual or joint action. Freire's name for this phenomenon is "conscientizacao", meaning "becoming aware".

Dialogue encourages critical thinking through an inductive process, moving from the particular to the general. The learners begin by identifying their individual problems and relating them to their co-learners' common concerns; they continue by reflecting on and dialoguing about the relationship between their problems and the world around them; and end up by discussing solutions to those problems. Language is the key tool used in this process, either in its oral or written form.

For Freire, language is more than just an instrument; it must be seen in terms of two dialectically related components: reflection and action. The function of language is to think about and act upon the world. Using language is not the mechanical activity of repeating somebody else's words. Instead it is the process of finding one's own voice. Dialogue serves the purpose of making meaning together and cooperating to attain shared meaning. Dialogue is reflection and action united. As Freire himself puts it, dialogue is "the collective naming of the world, in order to transform the world" (1972, p. 75).

In this context, students and teachers must relate and communicate in a "horizontal" rather than "vertical" manner. Authentic dialogue can only occur between equals.

Dialogue involves "listening" to the students — observing and interacting with them to arrive at concerns and problems. It centres around constant interaction and dialogue with the students. From this process a set of themes emerge which can become the basis of language study. Ideally, the themes should come from students. Otherwise, the instructor runs the risk of "depositing" his ideas in the learner and losing student interest.

This approach to literacy instruction was evident in several programs surveyed. In a writing improvement course at the Native Education Centre in Vancouver, problems or issues of concern emerged from the writing of personal autobiographical pieces. These issues were discussed in groups and provided the basis for further writing aimed at resolving or addressing the issues identified.

Another example of dialogical education is the "learning circles" organized by the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre. In these sessions, learners and tutors sit as equals in a circle and discuss a topic of concern to anyone present, such as housing. Everyone contributes to the conversation by providing personal stories or insights on the issue and "key" words are put up on a flipchart. Then, participants brainstorm for solutions to their problem and set out a plan of action. As a follow-up to this initial oral discussion, the learners engage in a variety of reading and writing tasks.

The three instructional approaches reviewed in this chapter, whole language, language experience and dialogical education, share several common characteristics: they all base literacy instruction on the experience, interests and concerns of the learners; acknowledge the variability of language used by different communities and individuals in different contexts; emphasize the initiation of instruction with meaningful discourse; integrate the use of oral and written language in classroom activities; and approach language learning as incidental, thus providing situations that necessitate its use, either in its oral or written form.

6.4. "Watch Then Do" In A Literary Context

One of the most striking aspects of our research into favoured learning situations was the widely expressed preference for, and success with, a "watch then do" approach to learning. As indicated, learning how to apply strategies successfully employed in past learning situations to academic contexts emerges as a major challenge to literacy educators.

While it is beyond the scope of this report to fully explore this issue — this clearly is an area that should be the focus of future research — some general principles are suggested. It seems clear that the essence of this learning preference in a literacy context is wholeness — seeing, understanding and learning the whole process rather than disconnected bits and pieces. It also means approaching literacy acquisition in a manner that concretely applies to, and concretely builds activities on, real social and personal experiences. Reading and writing must make sense, and it must be rooted in the learners' social context.

This process involves real dialogue, real writing, and such concrete student-centred techniques as guided visualization and drama. It means enacting the process of reading, writing, listening and speaking by using and creating social situations as a basis for the generation of text. The dynamics of the exchange of ideas, which is external in the social situation, becomes internalized in the process of composition. The resulting words are not plucked from the air but are socially embedded. Related to this is placing emphasis on narrative — drawing on the experiences and realities of the learner. This occurs within the framework of the writing process, which stresses the use of peer conferencing and extensive writing over the "mastery" of subskills.

Many programs surveyed used methods that were holistic, socially rooted and experiential. It will be enormously valuable to further explore and develop those specific techniques that are most consistent with the learners' past patterns of successful learning and are likely to result in the greatest and most effective literacy development.

7. Standard And Non-Standard Dialects Of English

Instructors working with Native adults need to deal with the fact that their students often speak a non-standard dialect of English. Furthermore, both instructors and learners have to face the generalized view of non-standard dialects as "aberrations" of "good" English. Linguists observe that while standard dialects are taught in school and used for mass communication and in most institutions, they are no more linguistically pleasing, accurate, "correct" or "superior" than any other dialect. Standard dialects gain their ascendancy over other dialects for social and historical reasons, not for their linguistic superiority (Toohey, 1984).

Christian and Wolfram, in an interview with the Montreal-based publication *Literacy Across the Curriculum* (1990), state that literacy programs for speakers of non-standard dialects should aim at "bidialectalism". This would allow people to maintain their own dialect, while also learning to use the standard dialect, particularly in its written form.

> Learners would develop the ability to switch between "dialects" when the situation warrants using the language that is socially acceptable in the situation. It is just as unacceptable to use a standard variety within a home community as it is to use the home variety in a standard-speaking community.

In terms of classroom strategies to achieve this goal, Christian and Wolfram, state:

> ... it starts with self-image. People who feel bad about the way they talk are handicapped in acquiring education skills. An understanding that there are different dialects, that people come from different communities with different heritages, is the start. Once you get people feeling more comfortable about the way they talk, naturally you have people who are more willing to take the kinds of risks that are necessary in order to accomplish educational tasks like reading. (ibid.).

A former literacy instructor at the Native Education Centre, Vancouver, reported that she engaged her students in a series of tasks that made language the object of "scientific inquiry". Students would examine their own language use and compare it to the use of standard English. As well, they would arrive at an understanding of the different situations in which either dialect should be used, and engage in a process of "translation" when necessary.

The main point is to create educational situations that will do away with the stigma that accompanies the use of non-standard dialects and to find ways to have literacy learners engage in language tasks that will allow them to advance towards the acquisition of reading and writing skills. As Toohey says,

> When the content as well as the form of one's normal oral expression has been stigmatized, or is nowhere to be found in literate uses of language, reading and writing pose formidable challenges ... The major problem in learning to read and write may not be knowing the right words, but rather knowing that one has the right to words. (p. 24)

8. Summary

This chapter has reviewed some pertinent research, including the current survey, and linked it to the practices that are proving effective in Native literacy programs operating across Canada.

The needs and aspirations of the student were identified as the place to start in planning a successful program . Flexibility in terms of location, format and scheduling was seen as being critical, and programs that were attempting to bring literary services to the students were examined.

A range of learner support services, including meals, transportation, day care, and counselling in a variety of areas, was identified as being important to attracting and retaining learners. Programs that identified community needs and addressed them, as well as those that used elders, community facilities such as school workshops and libraries, and volunteer tutors and other mentors, also proved successful.

Adequate, appropriate, and ongoing funding was identified as critical to the effective operation of programs by virtually every programmer and instructor spoken with, and the need for professional contact and support was emphasized. The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition was presented as a model for networking and support.

Community-based principles were delineated, and student-centred literacy approaches using whole language, language experience, and dialogical education were reviewed and related to operating programs. Finally, the importance of acknowledging and validating the learners' dialects was established, and suggestions for accomplishing this discussed.

V. Conclusion

This research report grew out of general concerns about current literacy programs for Native adults, especially pre-packaged programs such as Pathfinders. These programs have often been installed by government agencies without sufficient consultation with the communities or students involved, are generally inappropriate for Native adult learners and fail to reflect the full range of personal and community needs and aspirations. They are disconnected from the resources and realities of the community, and fail to accommodate the students' experience, language, and circumstances. Our objective was to go to the potential learners themselves in an attempt to establish their views on the purposes and perceived value of literacy, what had interfered with their learning to read and write in the past, what they saw as a positive learning environment and what current barriers kept them from participating in literacy program.

Fifty-six potential literacy learners from eight geographically and culturally representative communities were identified and interviewed. The analyzed results confirmed previous research indicating that adult learners are generally motivated by a complex of factors. Responses to an open-ended question regarding purposes of literacy revealed an enormous range of very personal goals, and when offered a limited range of purposes respondents ranked virtually all factors as important, with personal, knowledge, and instrumental goals all being ranked as very important by 70% of the respondents.

Past barriers proved equally varied, including personal, socio-economic and institutional factors. The probing of school experiences produced recollections of brutality, prejudice, inappropriateness of teaching methods and contents, belittlement, frustration, failure and cultural clash. Respondents indicated strong preferences for on-reserve, all-Native situations. Both tutorial and small group strategies were preferred, and an overwhelming number of respondents indicated that they learned best from a "watch then do" approach to learning.

Respondents were asked to indicate which of 26 factors presently constituted barriers to their participation in literacy programs. The results showed the range and number of elements that get in the way of participation. Those mentioned most often indicated particular concerns about availability of and knowledge about appropriate programs, financial support, appropriate instruction and self-confidence.

An analysis of the data by community indicated that community aspirations and needs also vary greatly, indicating the need to tailor programs to the specific character and circumstances of each locale.

To establish the relationship between the survey findings and actual practice in the field, successful Native literacy programs across Canada were examined and the practices were related to effective literacy principles identified through research and the survey results. Analysis of this data suggested principles of effective Native literacy programs that can be organized into four categories: community-based, student-centred, experiential, and personal support.

Community-based programs adapt to the special needs and conditions of communities while drawing on local resources and addressing community issues. Such programs are initiated by and accountable to the community, extend learning into the community, occur within the context of the community's overall development plan, and benefit the entire community.

Actual programs surveyed illustrated how these principles operate in practice. They assessed community literacy needs by contacting agencies and community leaders; utilized school and other community facilities; relied on elders for information on cultural practices and aboriginal language instruction; developed community activities such as coffee houses that feature elders telling stories in the Native language, dancing classes, and women's and elder's circles, and community dinners; and made use of community personnel as mentors, experts and tutors.

Student-centred programs begin with the individual needs of the learners, use the words and experiences of the learners extensively, develop content that is meaningful and relevant, accept and affirm the learners' language, employ flexible delivery approaches in a variety of settings, and stress dialogue and interaction. Programs in the field illustrated these principles by assessing individual needs, expectations, and situations through formal and informal interviews; delivering literacy instruction at workplace situations, halfway houses, and in the learners' homes as well as in classrooms; and by using one-to-one, small group and drop-in formats.

In addition, student-centred programs rely on personal journals and personal narrative for writing and reading instruction, emphasize language experience stories, and utilize "learning circles" where individual and common problems are discussed by tutors and students and are then used as a basis for reading and writing activities. Intergenerational programs are also utilized.

Experiential or "look then do" learning was strongly preferred by the respondents in the survey. As discussed in Section 6.4, in reading and writing programs, this means an in-class emphasis on drafting and revision using peers as well as the instructor; providing concrete experiences such as simulation games and field trips to write from; using guided visualization, collages, and other visual approaches; emphasizing experience-based reading and writing techniques such as language experience stories; and employing cooperative learning. Operating programs that illustrated this process used a variety of language experience approaches, such as field trips, shared reading, drama, audio and video taping and a writing process approach that emphasized drafting and revision over theory and mechanics.

Personal support takes two main forms — emotional (counselling and creating supportive learning environments) and situational (day care, transportation, living allowances). Programs address these needs in many innovative ways. Personal, career, addictions and family counselling are offered, and AA groups have been organized within centres. Family support workers and other agencies have also been involved.

Hot lunch and dinner programs have been instituted at several centres, transportation has been provided, and medical visits are built into some rural programs. Child care services are provided, and a "family literacy" program that involves school-age children learning and working with their parents has been piloted at several centres.

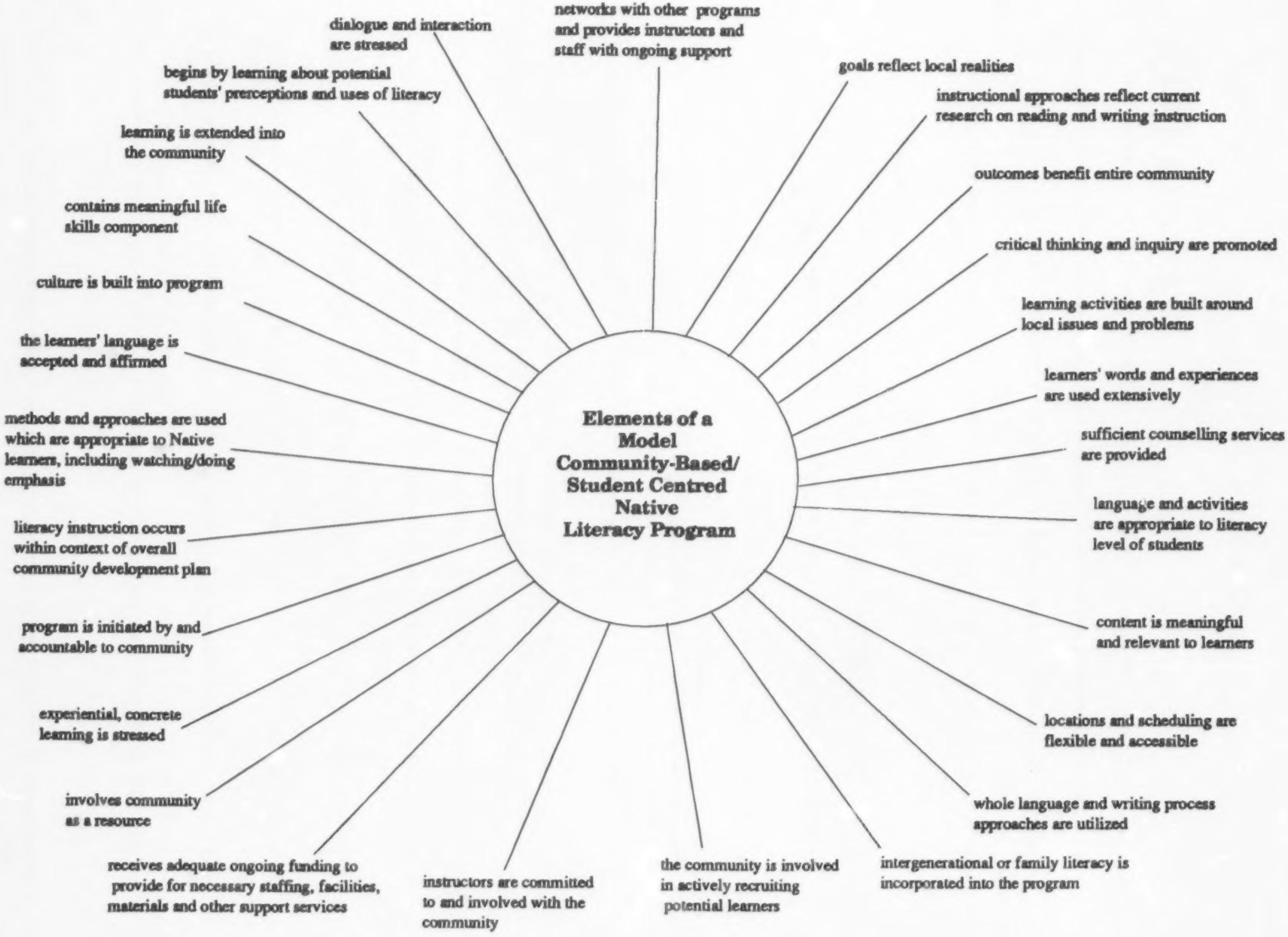
This research report provides some first tentative steps rather than a collection of definitive answers. Further research in Native literacy at the national level would provide a better profile of Native potential learners and their needs, hopefully leading to increased support for community-based and appropriate Native literacy programming, while more localized community research would provide the specific data that will result in more effective literacy instruction. Research into how instructors can more effectively accommodate Native learners' stated preference for "look-then-do" learning would be valuable, as would further investigation into other specifics of Native community-based and culturally appropriate literacy program delivery.

The initial premise that programmers and instructors must begin with the learners, letting the learners' realities and aspirations inform their program, was confirmed by the research. The recognition that the meaning and purposes of literacy, as well as the obstacles to participating in reading and writing classes, are enormously varied and must be accommodated through flexible, sensitive programs that start from, draw on, affirm and extend the learner is the primary message of this report.

The specifics of such programs will vary from location to location, and the exact strategies and methods that are most effective will emerge from further examination of practice and theory. Nonetheless, based on our research with potential learners and programs in the field, the fundamentals of good practice in Native literacy emerge clearly. These principles are contained in the "Elements of a Model Community-Based/Student-Centred Native Literacy Program" chart (Figure 6).

While much research remains to be done, this report provides some general direction for further investigation as well as some guidelines for practice that, in the hands of sensitive programmers and instructors, should translate into more appropriate and successful Native literacy programs.

Figure 6


Elements of a Model Community-Based/ Student Centred Native Literacy Program
networks with other programs and provides instructors and staff with ongoing support
goals reflect local realities
instructional approaches reflect current research on reading and writing instruction
outcomes benefit entire community
critical thinking and inquiry are promoted
learning activities are built around local issues and problems
learners' words and experiences are used extensively
sufficient counselling services are provided
language and activities are appropriate to literacy level of students
content is meaningful and relevant to learners
locations and scheduling are flexible and accessible
whole language and writing process approaches are utilized
intergenerational or family literacy is incorporated into the program
the community is involved in actively recruiting potential learners
instructors are committed to and involved with the community
receives adequate ongoing funding to provide for necessary staffing, facilities, materials and other support services
involves community as a resource
experiential, concrete learning is stressed
program is initiated by and accountable to community
literacy instruction occurs within context of overall community development plan
methods and approaches are used which are appropriate to Native learners, including watching/doing emphasis
the learners' language is accepted and affirmed
culture is built into program
contains meaningful life skills component
learning is extended into the community
begins by learning about potential students' perceptions and uses of literacy
dialogue and interaction are stressed

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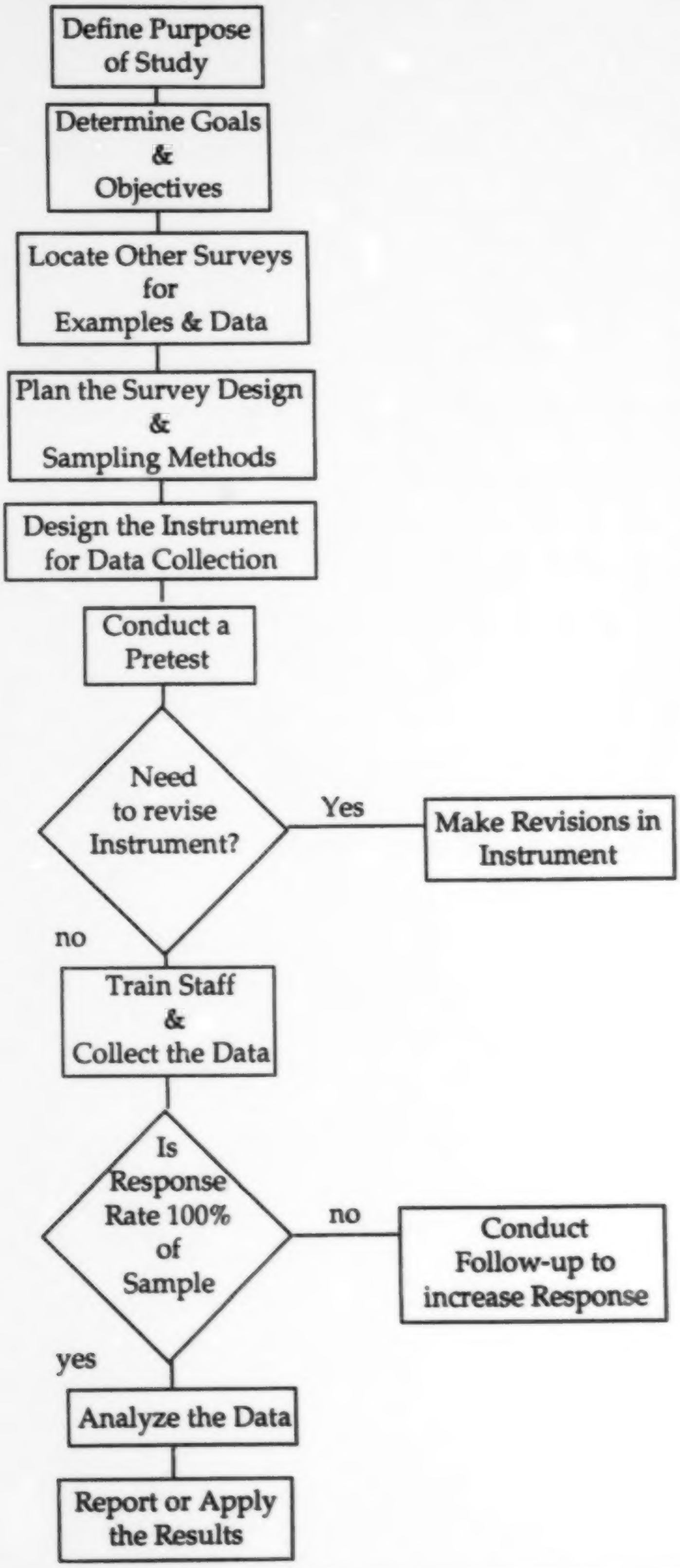
APPENDIX A

STEPS FOR CONDUCTING A SURVEY


Define Purpose of Study
Determine Goals & Objectives
Locate Other Surveys for Examples & Data
Plan the Survey Design & Sampling Methods
Design the Instrument for Data Collection
Conduct a Pretest
Need to revise Instrument?
Yes
Make Revisions in Instrument
no
Train Staff & Collect the Data
Is Response Rate 100% of Sample
no
Conduct Follow-up to increase Response
yes
Analyze the Data
Report or Apply the Results

APPENDIX B

NATIVE LITERACY RESEARCH SURVEY

I. DEMOGRAPHICS

Name (optional)

age

male/female

last grade attended

rural/urban

reading level 1 2 3

II. PURPOSES AND PERCEIVED VALUE OF LITERACY

1. Would you like to read and write better? (probe if no)

2. What would you be able to do with better reading and writing skills that you can't do now?

3. What problems do you encounter now because you don't read and write as well as you'd like to?

4. What can people in your community who read and write well do that you cannot?

5. If you were to learn to read and write better, what would be your reasons for doing so? (pause for general response. Record).

Then say, "I am going to read eight possible goals of reading and writing. Tell me from 1 to 5 how important these goals are to you, 1 being unimportant and 5 being very important."

_____ 1) (knowledge) To become better informed; to be better at reading and writing.

_____ 2) (personal) To feel better about yourself; to be happier and more self-reliant.

_____ 3) (family) To get along better with family members; to be a better parent/grandparent.

_____ 4) (community) To understand community problems better and to contribute to their solutions; to be more active in your community.

_____ 5) (instrumental) To be able to deal more effectively with daily tasks such as filling out forms, reading signs, writing cheques, etc.

_____ 6) (economic) To get a job or get a better job; to do your job better; to make more money.

_____ 7) (entertainment) To read stories and magazines; to get pleasure and entertainment from reading and writing.

_____ 8) (culture) To study our culture; to write down stories and pass on cultural information.

_____ 9) Others?

Reread the items the respondent ranked 5, and then ask, "Of these reasons, which one would be the most important to you?" Record.

III. PAST BARRIERS TO LEARNING TO READ AND WRITE

1. Why do you think you didn't learn to read and write better when you were younger?

2. Did you go to school? How did you like school? (probe) What didn't you like about school? (probe -- prejudice, racism, abuse, belittlement, alienation)

3. Why did you leave school? (probe)

4. Did you think your negative school experiences affected your learning to read and write? (probe)

IV. POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

1. If you decided to improve your literacy skills, what learning situation would you prefer? (probe -- eg. tutorial/ small group, all Native students, informal/traditional classroom)

2. Where would you prefer to learn?

3. What are the things you know how to do well? How did you learn them? (probe)

4. How do you learn best?

V. CURRENT BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

1. Why aren't you presently participating in a reading and writing improvement program? (Pause and record responses). Then say, "I am going to read you a list of common factors that keep people from getting involved in reading and writing programs. As I read them indicate whether they are a factor in explaining why you aren't involved in an adult reading and writing program." (Check those items the subject indicates are barriers to participation.)

SITUATIONAL

_____no financial support or resources
_____lack of time
_____lack of transportation
_____lack of childcare
_____interferes with job

INSTITUTIONAL

_____no appropriate program in the community
_____existing programs have inconvenient schedules
_____content is inappropriate
_____instructional approach is inappropriate
_____fees too high

INFORMATIONAL

_____don't know about programs or how to find out
_____don't know how to register
_____programs haven't been explained adequately

PSYCHOSOCIAL

_____don't believe improving reading and writing will help me
_____don't enjoy school or taking courses
_____not interested
_____too old to learn
_____friends aren't doing it
_____no support from family
_____way programs are taught isn't right for me (probe)

_____returning to "school" is scary
_____afraid I won't succeed
_____don't believe I can learn
_____too self-conscious
_____afraid of discrimination
_____spousal opposition

VI. INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS

1. How did the sequencing and wording of the questions work for this set of respondents?

2. What process did you use to identify respondents?

3. How did you go about setting up the interviews?

4. How long did the interviews take and how did the people you interviewd respond (eg. anxiety, eagerness, evasiveness, reluctance)

5. What other comments would you like to make on the process of administering this set of interviews?

APPENDIX C

NATIVE LITERACY PROGRAMS SURVEYED

Adult Education Centre
Box 8
Arviat, Northwest Territories
X0C 0E0
(819) 857-2903

Arctic College
Sanikiluaq, Northwest Territories
X0A 0W0
(819) 979-4051

Can-Am Friendship Centre of Windsor Inc.
1755 Wyandotte Street East
Windsor, Ontario N9A 6L7
(519) 252-8331

Chippewas of Nawash First Nation Literacy Program
R.R. #5
Wiarton, Ontario N0H 2T0
(519) 534-1689

Chippewas of Sarnia Education Committee
978 Tashmoo Avenue
R.R# 4
Sarnia, Ontario N7T 7H5
(519) 336-8410

Council Fire Native Cultural Centre
252 Parliament Street
Toronto, Ontario M5A 2Z4
(416) 360-4350

Hamilton Regional Indian Friendship Centre
183 James St. South
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 3A8
(416) 546-1446

James Bay Education Centre
P.O. Box 130
Moosonee, Ontario
P0L 1Y0
(705) 336-2913

Kishenohmatwin Adult Learning Centre
Norway House, Manitoba R0B 1B0

Native Education Centre
285 East Fifth Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V5T 1H2
(604) 832-3761

Native Literacy Coordinator for New Brunswick
Stephen Augustine, NBCC - Miramichi
80 University Avenue
Box 1053 Chatham, New Brunswick
E1N 3W4
1-800-561-2231

Native Women's Resource Centre
245 Gerrard Street East
Toronto, Ontario M5K 3K8
(416) 963-9963

Ni in Sakaan Literacy Program
c/o Indian Friendship Centre
29 Wellington Street East
Sault Saint Marie, Ontario P6A 2K9
(705) 256-5634

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
Box 399
Merritt, B.C.
V0K 2B0
Phone: (604) 378-2251

Nokee Kwe Occupational Skills Development Inc.
304 York Street, Lower Level
London, Ontario K5W 4R3
(519) 667-7088

Northshore Native Workskills Committee
c/o Mississauga First Nation
P.O. Box 1299
Blind River, Ontario P0R 1B0
(705) 356-1621

Ontario Native Literacy Coalition
9 St. Joseph Street, Suite 301
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1J6
(416) 972-6294

Portage Adult Education Program
c/o Portage Elementary School
Postal Bag 30
Fort Saint James, B.C. V0J 1P0
Radio phone: N69 9234-channel JW (through Prince George)

Snowdrift Chipewyan Literacy Project
Contact: Lyn Fogwill, NWT Literacy Coordinator,
Advanced Education
Government of the NWT
P.O. Box 1320 Yellowknife, NWT X1A 2L9
(403) 873-7141

Toti:lthet Centre
34110 Lougheed Highway
Mission, B.C. V2V 4J5
(604) 826-3691

Walpole Island Adult Literacy and Education Program
R.R.#3
Wallaceburg, Ontario N8A 4K9

APPENDIX D

ABORIGINAL LITERACY: THE SNOWDRIFT CASE STUDY

The Snowdrift Chipewyan Literacy Pilot Project

Snowdrift, Northwest Territories, is situated on the eastern end of Great Slave Lake, accessible only by air and water. It is a community of approximately 300 people, over 90% of whom are Native Indian, or Dene. Because of its isolation, the Native language, Chipewyan, survives relatively fluently when compared with other Athapaskan or Chipewyan communities.

The Native Adult Education Resource Centre was contracted in 1989 to assist the Snowdrift Dene Council and the Dene Cultural Institute of the NWT to establish an adult Chipewyan literacy class in Snowdrift. An adult educator from the Yukon Territory, Eleanor Millard, who has years of experience in the North and with Native people, was contracted to complete the pilot project.

The pilot project was designed in three phases. Phase One was developmental, in which the community established its objectives for the pilot project and the implementation period. In Phase Two, two instructors were trained and instruction of students took place. Phase Three saw the development and publication of a Dene literacy manual which will be used for helping other Dene communities set up their own literacy projects.

All of the groups interested in the pilot project were concerned with meeting the following objectives, which were met by the project:

1. to train an instructor
2. to discover the applicability of the results of the pilot project to other Dene communities
3. to actually teach some adult students Chipewyan literacy.

Some important questions arose from the project for the instruction of aboriginal literacy which need to be addressed and have implications for other Native literacy projects. It was found that the relationship between the extent of oral Native language retention and learning to write the language is very great. This may not be surprising, but what was surprising was that even in Snowdrift, where the language is heard to a much greater extent than most other Dene communities, the actual knowledge of the language is much less than one would think. The language used today by the youth, for instance, is not the language of the elders, but a much more contracted and changed form. In Snowdrift, there is the unique situation that the Chipewyan language has in the past been written in syllabics, but now it is necessary to standardize it to the roman (English) alphabet. This affects the involvement of elders since they know the syllabic alphabet and have an emotional commitment to it. Also, we noted that because of the lack of "modern" vocabulary in Chipewyan, English was often used as an easy substitute, rather than creating a new Chipewyan word, and English was used for "important" transactions such as giving directions. In other words, English is changing the aboriginal language to a much grater degree than might be hoped by anyone interested in retaining the language. This has very important implications for the teaching of literacy, the training of instructors, and the involvement of the elders of the community. It appears that each community will have to come to their own conclusions on how to deal with the problem since the effect of English is much greater in some communities than in others.

The NWT has the lowest level of literacy in English in Canada. Census Canada reports that 60.4% of Native adults have less than a Grade 9 education. Although there is already employment for anyone who is fluent in both English and an aboriginal language, most positions require literacy in English. This means that there seems to be conflict between those wanting to teach aboriginal literacy, which has limited use for employment, and English, which assures employment. Some communities have difficulty deciding which language they want used in the early grades because they see a conflict between learning English for jobs and the aboriginal language for retention of the culture. Although the choices must be left to those most affected, it is apparent that the issue should not be one of choosing one language over the other, but to offer competent instruction in both. A truly bilingual school system has proven to be the most expedient solution in many cases. There is little evidence that serious bilingual policies are being attempted in the NWT.

Complex choices must be made soon on the direction of both oral aboriginal language and literacy. The teaching of Dene literacy is seen by many as a means of preserving the languages and the culture. However, unless the oral base is expanded along with literate use, it is doubtful if either oral or literate aboriginal language will survive for any practical use through the next few generations. It may be that acceptance of the inevitability of language change is the next step, but this perspective will have a very serious impact on many cultural, educational and social structures. It is clear that unless informed decisions are made now, the languages may be lost by default.